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THE TOUCHSTONE

OR, THE

CLAIMS AND PRIVILEGES

OF

TRUE RELIGION,

BRIEFLY CONSIDERED.

BY MRS. ANNE GRANT,

Editor of the "Harp of Zion."

Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

Daniel v. 27.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is perhaps no effort so difficult, so frequently baffled, so thankless, and so often put forth in vain, as offering counsel.

Advice is to all persons unpalatable, just in proportion to their need of it; and those who require it most of all, are altogether inaccessible.

To offer counsel in worldly affairs, however truly kind and benevolent, and however imperatively called for, is generally deemed officious interference; but to attempt religious remonstrance is going a step too far indeed.

The world, always foremost in charity as well as wisdom, has voted to every man a prerogative to go to destruction in his own way; and each appears to guard the worthless privilege with jealous care.

If in worldly company, a serious person have the hardihood to hazard a remark, worthy of his Christian profession, becoming the service of his great Master, and very appropriate to his irreligious and careless auditory, the best reception it has any chance of meeting, is silence; while disapproving, uneasy looks, more discouraging than words, rebuke the bold and untimely intrusion.

A truly religious individual cannot be indifferent to the state of others, nor rest satisfied with his own personal interest in the riches of Divine grace. He

warmly desires that others may partake of the like precious faith; and above all, that God may receive from all his creatures, the worship and glory due unto his name. He fervently desires that the kingdom of God may come, and that His will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

But every avenue to the ear and to the heart of his acquaintance, and even his friend, is shut up to him in this labour of love.

If he deal gently, and merely hint at danger, or venture to commend the blessed truth, which, if he might, he would affectionately urge, he assails the impenetrable, hard and stony heart, deaf to the voice of the charmer, as fruitlessly as "one that beateth the air:" and if with more fervid zeal, that will not be

repressed, he storm that defenced citadel, with the battering ram of truth, and say, "Thou art the man," he has bravely performed his Master's work, but in all likelihood, he has lost his cause ; for who can tolerate personality ?

How then is the difficult and delicate office of insinuating counsel, to be performed by one not "clothed with authority ?" A Book seems to offer the easiest and most successful mode of conveying truth without offence. It is quite possible to say to a reader, "Thou art the man," without the fear or the danger of offending. The conviction may enter him like a "sharp arrow of the mighty : " he feels only the point of the weapon, and regards not the unseen, unknown hand which drew the bow at a venture, while the divine purpose directed its aim.

In the belief of this, I venture to offer this small publication ; an act in some respects, trying to me, but to which I am impelled by one powerful motive—the constraining love of Christ.

Painfully regarding often the field of the world, white unto harvest, and the great disproportion of the labourers, I have felt uneasy with my position, as a merely contemplative, inactive spectator, and have been ready, under a momentary stimulus, to say, “ Here am I ; send me.” But the kindling desire was soon quenched by false humility, and unworthy fear ;—“ Lord, I am of slow speech, and a slow tongue ; send by whom thou wilt send ;” and turning aside from a task, to which I felt unequal, I remained in silent obscurity. From that retirement, I have taken many an affecting, nay, heart-rending survey of this sad world,—sad in its sorrow,—sad-

dest in its mirth ; and have checked the better purposes that glowed within me, by saying, "They have Moses and the prophets ;" " line upon line, and precept upon precept ;" if they regard not these, is it likely they will listen to me ?

Here I might ever have found a specious plea for silence, but from the belief that however specious, and readily accepted by a world which would rather be let alone, it is a plea that will altogether fail before the great tribunal ; when those, over whom an influence for good might have been, and ought to have been exerted, (beholding the truth too late,) shall rise up in bitter and hopeless anguish, to condemn the false and heartless pretext, and to utter the deserved upbraiding, "Thou sawest me lingering, dying, perishing in my sins, and yet thou didst not tell me."

Well-grounded diffidence is robbed also of its ready apology, by a lively conviction, that it is neither "by might nor by power," nor by human eloquence; but by "the Spirit of the Lord," that any good is effectually wrought. "The help that is done upon earth, He doeth it himself," and he can execute his purpose, agreeable to his sovereign will, by the feeblest instrument, being sometimes pleased to put the heavenly treasure in the weakest "earthen vessels," that "the excellency of the power," may be more manifestly seen to be of Himself.

Many will be disposed to think I have selected the least likely means to obtain a hearing, that mal-contrivance could have devised. A *mediocre* book, without pretensions,—without a name,—without a patron,—without a recommendation,—cast upon a sated and disaffected public,

may be thought deficient in every element to maintain it buoyant on that abyss of letters which is strewed with a thousand wrecks of preceding, petty adventurers. Proclaim some "strange thing;" announce some nice shade of difference in doctrine; start a hitherto unheard-of view; strike out some novel and erroneous path; and the world will, for a time, go wondering after it. Administer truth in the captivating form of fiction; disguise and soften her severe and awful features with the deceitful drapery of poetic sentiment;—conceal or neutralize all that is unpalatable, and brightly gild whatever may appear gloomy;—and the book has not only a chance to be read, but to live its little day. But plain Scriptural truth, which runs counter to the taste and habits and opinions of the irreligious world;—truth, not illustrated nor adorned by alluring eloquence and fic-

tion ;—home-truth, unsparingly appealing to the slumbering conscience ;—truth, as old as the everlasting hills ;—not addressing the fancy and the imagination, but dealing only in those stern realities which surround the awful situation of man, as “ a probationer for eternity ; ” — truth, such as this, where shall it find hearers, except among those few who know it all already ?

Yet hope triumphs over abounding discouragement ; and the bare possibility that one individual may be led, by the accidental perusal of this appeal, to estimate aright the importance of eternal things, and the surpassing value of the “ one thing needful,” is incitement sufficient to make an effort so slight, and incur a risk of failure so trivial.

My little book may reach the hands of some to whom my faithless, faltering

tongue has failed to disclose its message. It may speak for me, perchance, when that tongue is for ever silent, feebly and defectively, I feel and confess ;—yet still it may speak for me, and bear witness against the delusive and lifeless show of nominal, formal religion ; and while it endeavours to point out the danger and the misery of living in estrangement from God, and in reckless neglect of all that is really worthy of the attention of immortal man, it may utter also a faint expression of the blessedness and present privileges of true godliness, and stimulate some who are lagging on the way to the kingdom, to press after more of “the *fulness of the blessing* of the Gospel of Christ.”

As the voluptuous Grecian Bard, who confessed his soul to be so sunk in softness, that though other themes courted

and claimed his muse, his melodious lyre, unstrung to all beside, would sing of love alone: so, in like manner, though with far other and sublimer emotion, the affections of the spiritual Christian are all attuned to one glowing, transcendent theme—a Saviour's dying love. He contemplates a world around him, sleeping the sleep of spiritual death—lying under the dominion of Satan, and hugging the loathsome chain, either in unsuspecting fatuity, or resolute choice—a world over which, during this, the transient day of its visitation, mercy still unfolds her heavenly banner, but on which also, according to the "sure word of prophecy," the vials of Almighty wrath are finally to be poured out; and forgetting all those minor interests of time which are suffered to occupy the mind of man, to his eternal ruin, he can discourse of nought beside, save Death and Judgment, and Eternity,

man's Lost state, and the Great Salvation. Let those who will, and who *can*, contribute to the amusement of such a world, to its mirth, its cruel enchantment, its demoralization;—be it his, regarding each lighter theme, as an “idle impertinence,” to reiterate evermore upon its drowsy senses,—“What meanest thou, O perishing sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God.”

London, Jan. 1842.

THE ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO MAN'S FALLEN STATE.

How blest are they who know the joyful sound,
And in the gospel, life Divine have found.
Oh, what is man, without its heavenly light !
Lost in the darkness of Cimmerian night ;
An alien, outcast, death's appointed prey,
Till mercy dawns in that celestial day ;
Pardon and peace proclaims, the curse repeal'd,
The sting of death drawn out, and heaven reveal'd,
Hail glorious Gospel ! gracious, wondrous plan—
The gift unspeakable of God to man !

THE Christian religion has sufficient external evidence to establish its welcome truth—evidence which will convince any one who will take the pains to search into it, and who is not perversely blinded by false philosophy or vice.

But its perfect adaptation to the state

and position of man is a proof, above all others, the most convincing, easily understood and received, and which, without laborious argument or deep acquaintance with its unquestionable credentials, recommends it to the acceptance of the unlearned.

It has mysterious heights and depths, far beyond finite comprehension ; but all that is absolutely needful for man to know, —all that it has pleased God to reveal—is suited to his exigencies, and eminently and alone productive of his happiness.

Comparing the holy and heavenly nature of divine truth with any or all of the earthly, sensual, devilish inventions of man, we exclaim, surely “the gods of the heathen are idols ;” but the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, he is God alone.

Man in all ages, and among the most unenlightened nations, is found not with-

out a semblance or form of religion. But in every region where the light of Divine revelation has not poured its celestial day, his worship is nothing else than foolish or cruel superstition—a crime and a curse—the invention of the depraved mind of man, acted upon by Satanic agency. We go from one abomination of the heathen to another, and shrink with grief and amazement from the dire review of a desolate world, lying in darkness and the shadow of death, and “full of the habitations of cruelty.” We see men bowing down to hideous stocks and stones, worshipping demons, practising murder as a religious rite, enduring cruel tortures, sacrificing their children, and barbarously destroying their own souls.

But the Gospel of Christ descends on this benighted world in all the glory and beauty of its Divine Original. Its doctrines, its precepts, and its unfailing result,

are sublimely expressed in the angelic anthem which accompanied its announcement to mankind:—"Glory to God in the highest,—on earth peace, and good-will to men." Benighted, dying, sinful, ruined man wants just such a "Saviour" as is "Christ the Lord." Consider his message—his doctrine—his precepts—his promises—and witness the gifts he confers ; and then say, "Truly this was the Son of God !" "Never man spake like this man !" This is manifested Deity, "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ! "

Hear his message :—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor ; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." This is a message suited to the true condition

of the whole race of the children of men. We are all by nature not only enslaved by wicked passions, and by "the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience;" but we are all captives under sentence of death — death both temporal and eternal,

"An unrepealable, enduring death."

We are all likewise the children of sorrow. There is none exempt from suffering. The most careless heart, sooner, or later, finds its own bitterness; and many a broken heart testifies to the weight of human misery, while some are made to drink the very dregs of "the cup of trembling, and to wring them out." If glancing at the mirth and gaiety and licentious freedom you witness in the world, you are disposed, unthinkingly, to call this statement in question; turn to the reverse

of the picture, and view it deeply, seriously, and with human sympathy for human woe.

Surely then, looking round on a world "steeped in tears," you will forget the partial, evanescent, baseless gaiety which deceived you for a moment, and with heartfelt commiseration acknowledge that "the whole creation groaneth." Consider also the blood-stained page of history. Read its appalling and dreary catalogue of crime and misery. See how men, scarce less savage than wild beasts, have preyed upon each other; how often millions have been sacrificed to satiate the selfish ambition of one; and point out, if you can, the nation free from the universal stigma, or the country that has not been deluged with blood. The records of history declare loudly the sin and sorrow of the world, and every man's individual experience and observation agree with their testimony.

But man's state is characterized by tremendous danger, as well as sin and sorrow and death. He is exposed without a shelter to the Divine wrath. He has sinned, and God is a sin-avenging God: he will by no means clear the guilty. He has pronounced "tribulation and anguish and wrath upon every soul that sinneth."

This is the righteous judgment of God, and he is all powerful to execute the sentence. He is "a consuming fire." "Glorious in holiness," sin is the abominable thing which he hates. "He putteth away all the wicked of the earth like dross." "He hath ordained Tophet of old; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

To the out-pouring of this wrath, man, as a rebel and a sinner, is exposed, without any remedy in himself. Not all Le-

banon for a burnt offering, thousands of rams, nor ten thousand rivers of oil; not his first-born for a sacrifice, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, would be accepted at his hand. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," and who can yet tell what that death is, which the soul that sinneth shall die? For the everlasting Jehovah, "who was, and is, and is to come,"—the Creator of the ends of the earth,—the God of the spirits of all flesh, wonderful, and unsearchable, is a "God that hideth himself." "The thundering of his power who can understand?" His way is in the sea, and his path in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known." The highest intelligences in glory are veiled before him; but from us, the alienated and sinful children of the dust, he, clothed with light which none can approach unto, hideth himself in the thick darkness. We see the shadow of his glory in the magnifi-

cence of his works, when he maketh the sun like a bridegroom to come out of his chamber, and the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. We sink under an overwhelming conception of his mighty power, when we survey the starry hosts of heaven—the work of his fingers, ordained, regulated, and supported by the word of his power. We see some of the terrific demonstrations of his displeasure, when the earth trembles at his touch, and opens one wide, yawning grave to entomb thousands of the children of men. We feel his indignation when he sends forth the breath of his fury in the wasting pestilence, making of a populous city “a ruinous heap.” But who can tell the power of his wrath when he shall come “to sweep the earth with the besom of destruction,” and “be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know him not, and obey not the Gos-

pel" of his Son. Who can stand before this great and terrible God?

"Careless sinner!

What shall then become of thee?"

The rending rocks and mountains will not cover thee, for the astonished heavens and earth shall flee away, and thou shalt stand, a rebellious worm, helpless, guilty, unsheltered, in the grasp of Omnipotent vengeance.

But is there no escape? Is man doomed to misery, and to the tyranny of his own passions, and the power of wicked spirits in this world, and then shut up to the destiny of eternal anguish? Yes! there is an escape, certain, perfect, wanting nothing, a means of escape exactly suited to circumstances so ruinous and awful. Behold the "Saviour, who is Christ the Lord!" Behold the manifestation of Deity, not clothed in the thunderings and light-

nings of his holy and inexorable law, for then we could not approach him ; but he comes clothed in our flesh—a Mediator between God and man, that we may draw near with reverential love, and contemplate, with wonder and awe, the great “mystery of godliness,” and receive with joyful trust the declaration of mercy, that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes his brow,
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below.

’Twas mercy filled the throne,
And wrath stood silent by,
When Christ was sent with pardons down
To sinners doomed to die.”

He comes, God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world unto Himself, “not

imputing their trespasses unto them," but "bearing them in his own body on the tree." "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world!" He died, the just for the unjust, and poured out his soul an offering for sin: and by that one offering of himself he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified—them who, through faith in his name and in his perfect atonement, have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And therefore shall these have "boldness in the day of judgment," and shall stand before the throne of God. They "shall not be hurt of the second death."

Well might the heavenly herald, when he announced the great salvation to our ruined world, open his heavenly communication with accents of gladness, and the "voice of song!" "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be

to you and to all people ;” for this messenger of the covenant is none other than the “ mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace ;” and His message brings life and immortality to light ; it is life from the dead. It announces liberty to the captive ; it opens the prison doors to them that are bound, and the “ gate of heaven to all believers.” It proclaims pardon and peace and everlasting life. It is balm to the sorrowing heart, hope to the despairing, and rest to the weary. It pours the light of a glorious day into the dark chambers of death, and irradiates the gloom. “ The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light ; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

Mark the doctrine and precepts of this Divine Teacher, and say if they be not from heaven !

How transcendently superior to the
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purest morality ever taught by the most enlightened among men! It is plain to every one, that obedience to the commands of Christ would entirely change the face of this world. The blessed predictions of prophecy would be instantly fulfilled. This waste wilderness, now deformed with thorns and briers, would "blossom like the rose." It would "blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing." "The eyes of the blind would be opened, and the ears of the deaf would be unstopped; the lame would leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb would sing:" "for in the wilderness would waters break out, and streams in the desert; and the parched ground would become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, would be reeds and rushes." How could any thing "hurt or destroy," where the law of love was the universal rule?

All offences would cease. Useless swords would be beat into ploughshares, and deadly spears into pruning hooks. Men would learn war no more. Discord and selfishness, violence and oppression—the unsightly and baneful offspring of man's corrupt nature—would be unknown; but instead of these, would spring up all the grace and beauty, and glory of the new creation,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness. In the place of thorns and briers, would arise “the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle.”

Witness the gifts which this divine Redeemer confers! He was “declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead;” and when he ascended up on high, he “led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” He triumphed “over death, and him that had the power of death, that is the devil.” What a triumph for a dying world!

Death is the abhorrence of all flesh ; nature shrinks appalled from the grave and corruption. Who can bear to anticipate his conflict with the king of terrors, and the certain and complete victory which the ghastly destroyer shall obtain over him? "There is no discharge in that war." However ennobled and beloved, however strongly attached to earth, and clinging to its interests, each in his turn, generation after generation, must go down into silence, and there "all his thoughts perish."

To mortal man, therefore, under an inexorable and inevitable sentence, there can be no object of more rational and deep solicitude, than "if by any means" he "may attain to the resurrection of the dead."

All nations, even the most barbarous and benighted, are found to possess and to cherish notions of a future existence.

The light of nature appears everywhere to have imparted this belief. But life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel alone. When Christ ascended up on high, he led man's last enemy, a vanquished conqueror — "captivity captive" at his feet; and thus confirmed the truth of his divine declarations, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "Because I live, ye shall live also." "The hour is coming when they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." He confers it on all who believe, and he gives both grace and glory. When he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High, he sent forth the great "promise of the Father,"

the Holy Ghost from heaven, to abide with his church for ever, to lead into all truth, and take of the things pertaining to his kingdom, and shew them to his people. And it abides according to his promise, unto this day, in all its quickening, enlightening, sanctifying, comforting influences. It is a living, convincing witness in every believer, who is made divinely conscious, though he can in nowise explain or comprehend the mystery, that he is born again of the Spirit. He is assured beyond all doubt, that he is the subject of Divine influence, that its life-giving power first brooded over the chaos of his dark and earthly mind, commanding the light to shine amid the darkness; and that it shone into his heart, to give him the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And it is by its vital energy that he grows in grace and in meetness for glory. Like the all-

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pervading but unseen air, it breathes upon him where and when and how it lists, and he knows not whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth. But this he knows, that it is altogether heavenly and divine; —that it first enabled him to “call Jesus Lord,” and that it is by its mighty power he is “kept through faith unto salvation.”

Here then is a revelation of mercy and truth, righteousness and peace and Divine power, graciously adapted to the state and to the position of man. Its provision meets all his wants, for it proclaims free pardon from guilt, the renewal of his nature, and everlasting life.

“All things are now ready.” “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

Such is the nature of the Gospel, and

such its suitability to man's fallen state, and such the free and gracious invitations it holds forth. Yet who hath believed the heavenly message, and "to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" "He is despised and rejected of men:" by some on one false ground, by others, on another; while the many, without thought or reason, or settled purpose, but with hearts preoccupied — either overcharged with surfeiting and pleasure, or with the equally destructive, inordinate "cares of this life," spend their days in forgetfulness of God, and in neglect of his offered grace, till the door of mercy is shut, the Gospel dispensation, so far as they are concerned, is closed, and the inexorable avenger delivers them over to the tormentors, "till they have paid the uttermost farthing."

Reader! are you one of those who make light of this great salvation? Have

you reasons for doing so, which you can carry to the bar of God? Are you convinced that the great and terrible day of the Lord is a cunningly devised fable? Are you assured that you have no immortal spirit within you, or feeling the evidence that you have a never-dying soul, do you deem it beneath your care? Are you willing that it should dwell with everlasting burnings? Have you never heard the warning voice of the Spirit of God saying within, "Flee from the wrath to come?" Do you really believe that for you there is the coming wrath, unless you flee from it to the feet of Jesus? Can you believe it, and yet remain carelessly unconcerned, amused with trifles, keenly interested about everything relating to time, absorbed in business, or intoxicated with vanity and folly?

Yes! you could sleep on, and take your rest, though one rose from the dead, to

tell you all the secrets of that nethermost hell into which you are sinking. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?"

O thou all-quickenng Spirit! "Lord and giver of life!" descend with thy mighty power, and touch with vital energy, the dead in trespasses and sins. Breathe on these slain, that they may live!

Art thou not a fire and a hammer? Break the hard and stony heart, and graciously constrain the unpardoned, unsheltered, careless sinner to flee to the refuge of mercy, from the wrath to come.

PRACTICAL UNBELIEF.

“ See'st thou this fulsome idiot ? in what measure
He seems transported with his antic pleasure
Of childish baubles ? Canst thou but admire
The empty fulness of his vain desire ?
Canst thou conceive such poor delights as these
Can fill the insatiate soul of man, or please
The fond regard of his deluded eye ?
Reader, such very fools art thou and I.
We toil for trash, we barter solid joys
For airy trifles, sell our heaven for toys :
We catch at barley grains, while pearls stand by
Despised ; such very fools art thou and I.”

QUARLES.

INFIDELITY gathers its unhappy votaries out of various classes of men. It may be the offspring of haughty reason, of self-confident ignorance, or of vicious propensity. The first is comparatively rare, yet there are men who do reject

divine revelation, because it is not made clear to their natural understanding : they stumble at its testimony, impotently strive to penetrate its mysteries, and proudly grapple with its difficulties, till the bewildered mind is lost in its own mazes, and wraps itself in the mantle of ten-fold night. "If the light in you become darkness, how great is that darkness !" These are laborious sceptics : they sift and search, and turn and overturn ; professing to seek truth, but all the while obstinately rejecting the only light to their path, and lantern to their feet, they blindly blunder on through every bog and quag-mire of error, till they are lost at last in outer darkness. Of some of these the memorial has not perished with them. By their baneful writings, they have spread in the path a net for the feet of the unwary, and many are "snared and taken." "The abhorred of

the Lord shall fall into it;" but "the way-faring man, though a fool," if he ask counsel of God, "shall not err therein:" their memento will serve rather as a beacon to warn him from the ditch, into which these miserable victims of doubt and despair have themselves fallen.

But scepticism finds a readier entrance into the minds of the self-willed ignorant; they are content to take things at second-hand; they cannot argue, but they can deride; they can pass the base coin of others, and mistake it for sterling worth. Then can term faith, credulity; religion, priestcraft; sanctity, hypocrisy; and divine revelation, imposture. These, from their shallowness, are perfectly self-satisfied: to differ from the good and wise, is distinction enough for them.

But there is a third class, who may go to the ox and the ass to learn understanding, who say in their hearts, "There is

no God." These are the vicious;—they desire to have it so. Divine truth is very unwelcome to the guilty. Wallowing in sin, these strive to persuade themselves, that the day of retribution is a fabulous dream. But the troubled conscience cannot always believe the lie;—it will speak, and as it reasons of accumulated guilt, and judgment to come, even the vicious sometimes "believe and tremble."

Thus sceptics may attain their forlorn and unenviable pre-eminence in misery, by various ways; but they all agree in their enmity to truth, and in wilfully choosing death and despair as their portion. They "are clouds without water, carried about of the winds,—raging waves of the sea, foaming out their shame,—wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

We must however do these wretched victims of the infidel's creed, the jus-

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tice to acknowledge that they excel in *consistency* those who profess better things.

Believing in no invisible world, but only in such things as are palpable to the senses, and that at last, they shall be laid in the grave like sheep, they consistently adopt the maxim of the Epicureans of old,—“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” Let us take every pleasure this life can give. “Who is Lord over us?” We will do that which is right in our own eyes. “Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?” It is not irrational in those who believe that this life is all, to live supremely for this life: to heap up its riches, greedily grasp its enjoyments, keenly pursue its trifles, sink into its grossness, and savour only of its earthliness.

But what we remark as worthy of astonishment, is the *practical unbelief* that

prevails among those "who profess and call themselves Christians."

Bold, unshrinking, confirmed infidelity, we repeat, is comparatively rare ; but *practical* unbelief overspreads the greater part of nominal christendom ; for so, we think, we may term a profession of faith which is altogether uninfluential. We see how men act in natural things, under the force of strong, lively conviction. When a man desires any earthly object, how rapidly he ascertains the means of attaining it, and how vigorously does he pursue those means, till he gains his purpose ! And for this simple reason, his knowledge and his belief influence his conduct.—He is in earnest : the object of his wish, may be eminence in his profession ; it may be riches ; it may be fame, or worldly greatness,—a bubble it must be, be it what it may, for death at any moment can break it : but he pursues it

with untiring assiduity ; difficulties daunt him not, nor does labour weary. He “ so runs that he may obtain ;” yet alas ! it is only for an earthly crown, a gilded bauble, a plaything for his old age, if the fatal sickle of time shall spare him.

This same individual professes to believe the Bible ; he does not call in question any of its declarations ; but how do they affect his conduct ? Does the influence of them appear in his life ? A formal attendance at church once a week, is perhaps the only badge of religion he thinks it needful or expedient to wear. If he be a man of business, you will find him in his counting-room, keenly intent on extending his connexions, increasing his gains, and laying up treasures on the earth at the expense of his soul.

If he be a man of pleasure, he is frequenting every place of idle and sinful

amusement. Entertainment and indulgence appear to be the end of his being. No stray thought concerning the idleness and folly of his life, diverts him for a moment from his pursuits.

Now is it not reasonable to expect that a man who professes and calls himself a Christian, if he really believe the truth of the Bible, shall be influenced in spiritual things, in the same way, and in the same degree, as belief influences him in natural things? Then to what cause but practical infidelity, can we impute the utter insensibility of most around us to unseen and eternal things. What creates the distinction between a real Christian, and a worldly man? It is genuine faith. The one "believes to the saving of his soul;" the other, let his professions be what they may, is to all intents and purposes, a practical infidel.

And how great, and astonishing is the

insensibility of the natural mind to known and professedly received truth! Were it not so common, it would be deemed almost incredible. See the bustle, the anxiety, the untiring devotion, the strenuous exertions, the watchful solicitude of the man of business, eager to get gain; the ceaseless round of gaiety and dissipation, and trifling, childish amusement of the man of pleasure: above all,—the weariness, the idleness, the utter vacuity of thought, purpose, and occupation of that privileged class of society, gifted with leisure, “the most precious distinction of wealth.” Now all these, the man of business, the man of pleasure, the child of pride and luxury, profess and call themselves Christians; and know that “it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment.” The man of business, who is following his gains with an interest so keen and so absorbing,

without a thought of preparation for the life to come ; knows that at any period his present life may end, and that at no distant day it must certainly end, when he shall enter on a life of interminable woe ; for “they that live after the flesh shall die,” which means, shall perish for ever. The man of pleasure, too, though stupified with the intoxicating effects of habitual folly, is hasting to perdition, with his eyes open ; he is sensible that “for all these things, God will bring him into judgment,” and that “the end of these things is death.” And the children of luxury, who expend their time, their means, and their thoughts altogether on personal ease and indulgence, are aware that He whose sacred name they do not scruple to bear, has said, “If any man will come after me, he must take up his cross, and deny himself.”

There is no discoverable sense on the

minds of any of these, of their moral obligation to God. There is no recognition of Him at all: "God is not in all their thoughts." They account themselves and their possessions their own, do not practically acknowledge any thing they have as the gift of God, or use it as such. They call their time their own, and feel no responsibility for its use, abuse, or utter waste.

Is this short of practical atheism? Compare it with the scriptural measure of consecration to God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." This commandment, which is indeed "exceeding broad," comprehends a principle of love, filling all the energies of the soul of man; and leading to a constant, and deeply influential consideration and acknowledgment of God, in all his essen-

tial attributes, and in every relation to man in which he is revealed.

But God and eternal things are habitually banished ; while there is nothing found too trifling, too foolish, too despicable to interest and occupy the mind of immortal man,—man who has only the breath in his nostrils between him and never-ending misery,—man who was created “ to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.” No exhibition is too silly, no entertainment too low and offensive, for that mind, endowed with a capacity so great, and designed for an end so exalted. The trumpery show, the trashy tale, the idle song can charm. The news and the fashions of the day, a balloon, a band of music, a procession, or any one thing to gaze at, will gain the ready attention, and awake the most lively emotion.

See the immense machinery ever at work to divert and make merry this poor,

dying, besotted world; to keep men from a moment's serious thought, or render them incapable of it; and cheat them of the only opportunity of saving their souls. There seems an actual conspiracy on the part of the world's purveyors, to keep mankind from reflection; and these agents in the destruction of souls, receive unbounded encouragement from their deluded, but delighted victims, who as they drive from pleasure to sport, and from sport to entertainment, and from the last new novel, to the multitudinous newspaper, still unsatiated, continue to cry,

“Tickle and entertain us, or we die.”

Acquaint an enlightened stranger with the rank and dignity of man as a Christian; tell him his high obligations; explain to him the great end of his being, the exalted privileges to which he is invited in this life, and the glorious inheri-

tance that is laid up for him in heaven ; then shew him the habits, the pursuits, the pleasures of those calling themselves by the sacred name of Christ.

Accompany him to their public haunts, and let him take a Bible, their professedly received rule of life, along with him, that he may "judge righteous judgment."

Take him to a theatre and an opera,—the nursery and playground of "the Prince of this world"—to Moloch's den, where nightly sacrifices are offered up.

Let him read first, "the Gospel of the grace of God ;" that "the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil ;" that "the grace of God hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world looking for that blessed hope, and the

glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Would he not say, glancing at the spectators, the decorated stage, the pantomime, and the victimized performers,—
"Can these be Christians? Has this
"grace of God " appeared to them? Are these the expectant heirs of heaven? Do they really believe this book I carry in my hand? What a scene for any one who is looking for that "blessed hope" of which I read—a hope which purifies the soul, even as Christ is pure!

Accompany him next morning to some fashionable church. He will be astonished to recognize many of the individuals he met at the previous night's entertainment; still more will he marvel when the solemn service begins. All devoutly kneel together. The most humbling confessions of sin are made, confessions that

seem to labour for words to express the intensity of penitential sorrow. Supplications are offered up to be delivered "*from all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil,*" "*from hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandment,*" and to be saved in "the hour of death, and the day of judgment;" and this deliverance is obtested by all the humiliation and sufferings, by all the unutterable and vicarious agonies, by the finished work and glorious triumph of the Son of God, and by the descent from heaven of the Holy Ghost. Then follow "thanksgivings and the voice of melody," ascriptions of praise, mingling with the sublime and seraphic adoration of the hierarchy of heaven, and with all the glorious company of the church triumphant. It is succeeded by the acknowledgment that the great and terrible God, whom they are worshipping, "glorious in

holiness, fearful in praises," shall "*shortly come to be their Judge*," and it is followed up by a solemn protestation of magnifying his name, "*day by day*," and "*worshipping him ever world without end*." The confounded stranger would think within himself, "Is it possible that these worshippers whom I met last night, believe what they are uttering? Do they think that God will be mocked? Can they forget that the omniscient "eye of his glory" followed them to their midnight pastime, and searched out every vain and sinful emotion excited there, by the ensnaring artifices and wanton buffoonery they sought for their entertainment. Do they forget that his all-searching eye rests on them now with holy displeasure, while with looks of self-approval and complacency, they leave his sanctuary, to follow all the devices and desires of their own hearts.

Take him with his sacred guide—"the

law and the testimony" in his hand, to that emporium of fashionable reading, a circulating library. Let him search its shelves, and inspect their contents : tales, novels, romances. What aliment for the young opening mind of a rational and immortal being ! What refreshment for hoary age, just dropping into eternity ! Yet he learns that these countless tomes of vapid stories, are greedily devoured by all ages. He bears in his hand the words of eternal truth, which are able to make men wise unto salvation ; he would marvel that childish fictions can amuse or deceive for a moment ; still more, that they can cheat hour after hour, and day after day, and half the night ; that they have the power to destroy all relish, or even endurance of sober truth ; and to keep the mind of their indefatigable readers in a state of feverish excitement, insatiably thirsting for similar novelty. He would ask, " Are

these fitting mental resources for those who are commanded to "watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation," to prepare to meet their God ; and who will be called to give an account of every idle hour, and every idle word in the day of judgment ?

Perhaps this may be deemed an insignificant object to attract much observation or censure: we beg to differ, and do not hesitate to regard the practice of novel reading, (an evil of enormous growth,) as one of the sure, though less prominent bulwarks of Satan's kingdom. Learning and science, and the beautiful and elegant productions of taste and genius, refine and elevate and ennoble the mind, and are the allies, not the enemies of religion ; but surely there is not a more deadly poison than that derived from pernicious and frivolous reading, nor a more extensive source of mischief than the press

when abused. Silly fictions, if they have not, what is called an immoral tendency, are considered innocuous. But can that be harmless, which profusely devours precious time, vitiates the taste, preoccu-
pies the mind, totally misleads the judgment, insidiously instils false sentiments, false views, false opinions—the leaven of this world; and renders simple truth and reality absolutely distasteful. Nor is this all,—the perceptions of purity must be very obtuse in that mind which sustains no injury from mingling, through means of a fictitious book, with the foolish, the low, the depraved, and even the vilest of mankind, in whom are exhibited all the base passions which disgrace poor, ruined human nature, vilely caricatured, to render it still more vile.

An individual with a pure and heavenly mind, shrinks from such entertainment, with unmingled aversion and disgust, as an

affront offered to his taste, his intellect and his feelings. Among the thousand story-books written at once to please and to abuse the sickly fancy of the distempered mind, there are many exceptions unstained by grossness, but there are few indeed which do not remain chargeable with falsehood, flimsy sentimentality and folly, and with every hurtful tendency which we have attributed to them.

Forgive, reader, the seeming harshness of this sweeping assertion; and before you utterly condemn its severity, strictly examine whether truth and fact, and the word of God, do not sustain it all. Things are right or wrong, not as they may appear to erring mortals, every imagination of whose heart is only evil continually; but they are right or wrong as they stand the test of scripture, and will abide the tribunal of that day, when every man's work shall be tried by fire, and the

faithless steward shall be summoned to his dread account.

How great the responsibility of those who cater for the public taste ; who do not employ their talents in the cause of wisdom and virtue ; but who court and acquire popularity, by sacrificing to the vitiated taste of man, and to the worst passions and feelings of his nature ! A bad man may do irreparable injury to society : his example and influence may corrupt all around him, and especially those unhappily dependent on him ; the effect of the evil may extend beyond calculation and estimate. But he who writes a pernicious book, sets the stamp of perpetuity on his deteriorating power : he himself shall pass away like a thing of nought, but his malignant influence will live for ever. From one generation to another, it will prey like a canker-worm on the expanding mind of youthful inno-

cence ; it will “pervert judgment,” “call evil good, and good evil, put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,” and like a blasting mildew, wither wherever it touches. The unhappy author, removed to reap his meet reward, may long have been lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torments, without a drop of water to cool his tongue ; but his works continue their devastating course ; and another and another victim receiving from them the first wrong bias, contaminated, misled, and finally ruined, shall descend to that abode of misery, to heap curses, and increased damnation on the head of the already agonizing betrayer.

But to return. — Take the stranger where you will, and let him meet whom he may, what does he see and hear ? He perceives “the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life,” everywhere gratified ; by those of high degree,

in a refined and costly manner ; by those of low degree, in a grosser form, but the spirit is the same. The sparkling jewels, the opera, the ball, the festive board—groaning with profusion and luxury, are the privileges of the wealthy;—the tavern, the two-penny show, the cheap theatre, and riotous mirth—“the crackling of thorns under a pot,” are the less expensive resort of the humbler poor ; but they are equally worthy of an immortal being, and not more strongly condemned by that solemn and equalizing sentence, — “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

What does the stranger hear ? The authoritative, false maxims, the hollow and selfish principles, the absurd and ever varying fashions of this world, both commended and enjoined : he hears all that differs from this world, disapproved, repudiated, ridiculed.—He reads, as he

listens, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." He hears honour, and spirit, and worldly aggrandizement, and eager pursuit of human praise, applauded: he reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the pure in heart, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness," and they who seek "not the praise of men, but the honour which cometh from God only."

He sees men toiling at the oar of business, as if their everlasting hopes depended on their efforts; some labouring in the fire for very vanity; others fluttering from trifle to trifle,—

"The foam upon the waters not so light."

He goes into company; he hears the sound of "the harp and the viol," the laugh, the dance, and the song; but he

would listen in vain to hear any "mention made of the Lord, or of the operation of his hands." In vain he would interrogate; in vain he would expostulate; in vain he would strive to call their attention to the blessed Book he holds in his hand—their charter of eternal life—their guide to heaven—"the true sayings of God,"—"the words that shall judge them at the last day." They would start at the bare imputation of discrediting its testimony; they profess to believe and respect its unstudied pages in the aggregate; but they practically disavow, and trample under foot, every doctrine and precept, every promise and threatening it contains.

What is this, if it be not practical unbelief? Have we overcharged this picture? Is it a caricature? Oh no! It is only a slight, partial, imperfect outline of humiliating and undeniable truth. Reader, from your own observation, fill

up the sketch : here are only faint touches of some prevalent follies : throw into it the deeper, darker shades of vice—crimes and cruel oppression, the cry of which is going up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth—enormities practised daily in this land of Bibles, where “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men :” and when you have completed the gloomy scene, and added all the aggravations derived from Gospel privileges ; from being by light and knowledge and spiritual advantages, “exalted to heaven,” take up the bitter lamentation of the prophet, and say, “Except the Lord had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”

Blessed be God, that though iniquity and ungodliness abound, he hath still left unto himself, the thousands of Israel,

“who have not bowed the knee to Baal,
nor kissed his image.”

“Ten righteous would have saved a city once ;—
And thou hast many righteous. Well for thee !
That salt preserves thee.”—

But “the day of vengeance of our God” is approaching, when a final separation shall be made, and that “salt of the earth” shall no longer preserve the corrupt mass from destruction : “the wheat shall be gathered into the garner, and the chaff shall be burned with unquenchable fire.”

The practical language of an unbelieving world is, “Where is the promise of his coming ? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning.”

But this is the warning of heavenly wisdom ; “Behold I come as a thief in the night :” “Watch therefore.”

Ah, say not then in thine heart, thou who art madly running on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, "My Lord delayeth his coming;" for at an hour when thou thinkest not, an hour which will be *too late* for thee, an hour when thy fond heart is full-gorged with pleasure; when the wine-cup, and thoughtless mirth, and the ensnaring song are steeping thee in their enchantments, thou mayst suddenly discover the hand-writing on the wall, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

The end of the world comes rapidly and surely to every individual; and the final winding up of the long tragedy which has been performed upon its stage, is not far distant, though "one day be as a thousand years unto the Lord, and a thousand years as one day."

"Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also

which pierced him ; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."

"And the Ancient of days shall sit, whose garment is whiter than snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool ; his throne like a fiery flame, and his wheels like burning fire. A fiery stream shall issue and come before him ; thousand thousands shall minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand shall stand before him. — And the judgment shall be set, and the books shall be opened. And the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and shall be judged out of those things which are written in the book according to their works."

Reader ! art thou prepared for this tremendous scene ? Dost thou really believe thou shalt see it with thine eyes ? The vision tarries ; it must tarry, till the times are fulfilled : but thy day of grace tarries

not; it is fleeter than the shot arrow. Yet for a little moment, thou standest between two eternities; and then thou shalt go to "thy own place," to the final dwelling of all flesh; and wait in that unchangeable repose, "till the end of the days," when "the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God" shall rend thy prison-house, and bring thee forth to judgment.

"Oh, amid that scene of wonders,
When the heavens and earth shall flee
'Mid ten thousand thousand thunders,
Jesus ! then remember me :
While thy lightnings round me play,
Grant me mercy in that day !"

ON THE RIGHT IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.

Virtue, or purposed virtue still be thine :

This leaves

In act no trifle and no blank in time ;

This greatens, fills, immortalizes all ;

This the blest art of turning all to gold ;

This the good heart's prerogative to raise

A royal tribute from the poorest hours ;

Immense revenue ! every moment pays.

YOUNG.

TIME is a common gift, bestowed on all ;
but it is the most valuable talent with
which man is entrusted, for it is the means
of improving every other ; of acquiring
all that can make him wise and happy
and useful here, and safe and blessed to
all eternity. Who shall speak the worth
of time ? No mention can be made of
kingdoms, for what can be compared to
the precious life !

But how often is it “a price put into the hands of a fool to get wisdom!” He has no conception of its value; he wastes it, abuses it, permits any one to rob him of it, tries every expedient to destroy it, and thankfully flies to every source that shall help to relieve him of it.

It is part of the curse entailed on fallen man, that in the sweat of his brow he shall eat bread; and the labouring classes of society feel this fruit of sin in all its bitterness. The time they can call their own, is small in proportion; but it is not the less infinitely valuable, inasmuch as besides their daily bread to earn—the necessary provision for this life—they have, as well as others, to work out their own salvation, or perish for ever.

But on a large and highly favoured class of society, time is bestowed as a free gift, burdened with no necessary demands for this world; it may be turned to any

account that its possessor shall choose. He may trade with this single talent, and bring in a revenue of sacred wealth, imperishable riches and honour.

He may employ it, as do many of the excellent of the earth,

“Friends to mankind, and delegates of heaven,”

in scattering blessings all around him ; his influence may be felt to the remotest part of the world, and as long as the world shall remain. He may be had in everlasting remembrance on earth, and his good works, which every where praise him in the gates, may go up in perpetual memorial before God. By the unwearied cultivation of this single talent, he may become blessed and wise in his generation ; the light of the world—the salt of the earth ; and in the future state of glorious recompense, “shine as a star in the firmament for ever and ever.”

But how many ways are there of mis-using this precious talent!

See it in the hands of one, "void of understanding"—the mere idler.—How often do we see it! Of how many persons may it not be said, that they only vegetate! They have no one object in life; but exist from day to day, trying every mode of "killing time." They are never found doing any useful thing; the hours of every day, "more precious than rubies," are squandered in occupations too foolish to bear mentioning. The calm and valuable period of the morning, when the mind is refreshed and vigorous, is consumed in unnecessary sleep, that the day may be shortened; then begins their most important and laborious duty—the decoration of the person, protracted by many for hours. What a sinful and pernicious waste! This occupation does more than "kill time:"—it kills the soul; and kills

it as effectually as grosser vice. Can any thing deaden and harden the heart more than personal vanity? Observe the visible cogitations of that vacant mind, solely intent on the artificial, unseemly, excessive adornment of the casket, without one thought of the inestimable jewel within—the never-dying soul, “perishing for lack of knowledge.” That thoughtless spirit is sealing its own destruction. That full heart gorged with self-admiration, transported with various hues, modes, shapes and fashions, half-wearied in trying their different effects,—what a spectacle for God and angels! How might these hours be spent, and that poor, vain, disordered heart, be filled and regulated! This is an immortal, accountable being, possessed of a soul, (though glancing at the childish vanities around, one might feel almost tempted for a moment to doubt it,) possessed of a soul that

must be saved from everlasting misery by the putting forth, and that continually, of all its energies, or drop, self-destroyed, into perdition. That immortal being, playing with those trinkets and gewgaws, was formed for better things than these ; was made capable of fellowship with God,

“ Communion sweet, communion large and high.”

That heart, doating on all manner of fooleries, has a capacity that might be filled with Divine love ;—with light and joy and glory inexpressible—the ennobling result of intercourse opened with God. That dark chamber of folly might be made the vestibule of heaven. Hours wasted in most needless and hurtful attention to personal appearance, if wisely and rationally spent in devout and holy exercises, might fit that being for the society of angels, and for “ following the Lamb in a white robe.”

If there be a spectacle on which those ministering spirits, who

“Walk the earth

Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep,”

and who know man's high and everlasting destiny, look with commiseration and astonishment, it must be on this frivolous, sinful, wearisome consumption of time. If, on the contrary, there be a sight causing joy among the angels of God, it must be to behold a happy human heart, rejoicing in the full participation of those great and glorious things which God bestows on them that seek him. The worshipper is beheld by Him only “who seeth in secret,” but he is “rewarded openly:”—for as the face of Moses shone when he descended from the mount, so do we discern a perceptible irradiation in the countenance and spirit of him who is much with God.

“ When one who holds communion with the skies,
Has fill'd his urn where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things ;
’Tis even as if an angel shook his wings.
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.”

But is it so, when we come to associate with those who have been spending their time in sinful trifling? Do we find that their morning’s occupation has fitted them for the noblest and best purposes of their being, to fulfil with wisdom and ability every duty in life devolving upon them, and to diffuse on all around, the happy and holy influence of genuine piety? No, we see and lament all the meeter fruits of “vanity and vexation of spirit,” and the corresponding waste of the remainder of the day. It is spent in unproductive idleness. Foolish books, and more foolish conversation, childish games and idle amusements, are gladly resorted to, to get rid of it; yet many a

heavy hour is spent in dull slothfulness. Day after day, and year after year pass away; but no change of pursuit, no elevation of character appears. Grey hairs here and there become visible; but wisdom and discretion, and that ennobling piety which is to the hoary head, "a crown of glory," are still absent.

Time is tracing his unsightly furrows on the countenance; but the mind remains an untouched and naked waste: till he begins to enfeeble the mental powers, he seems to make no inroads there. The capacity is neither enriched nor enlarged. We perceive with surprise, that the judgment of things is the same, as in immature youth; the world has the same attractions, and vanity equal lustre: personal decorations, becoming now more needful, are consequently, more than ever laborious and absorbing. Card-playing, that well adapted pastime for second

childhood, is now an indispensable amusement, and greedily resorted to, for the tedious hours begin to drag heavily.

But the last sands of life are running down. Time has lingered long : a thousand have fallen at her side, cut down in the bloom of youth, in the vigour of life, in the midst of usefulness, beloved and lamented ; but this cumberer of the ground, in the inscrutable ordination of Divine Providence, is spared to swell out the long account of four-score wasted years. Their number is at last completed, and the monotonous and utterly useless existence is now drawing to a close. Its last hour must be spent in the chamber of death ; decorations must be exchanged for the shroud, and the painted playthings for worms and corruption.

The final solemnity of life's high game is over ; but where is the lost spirit ?

“ Oh, that some blabbing ghost would let it out,”

to warn the careless, infatuated survivors. Time has become eternity. The wasted life can never be recalled. It might have been wisely, happily, usefully spent ; it might have terminated in triumph and glory ; and have left behind it, a bright pathway to the skies, for others to emulate and tread : but all that can be said at the close of such a dull career, is that the light has become "dark in the tabernacle," and "the candle is put out." The lost spirit is gone to give up its dread account. And shall it perish, and the living not lay it to heart ?

"Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !"

Now contrast this dismal waste of the precious gift of God, with its right improvement. See the same talent in the hands of those who have asked and received a "wise and an understanding

heart." There is no listlessness, no vacuity, nor burden here. Every hour seems of importance, and is occupied in some useful, beneficial, ennobling employment.

These have so numbered their days, as to apply their heart unto wisdom. They are not satisfied to dream through existence without inquiring and ascertaining whence they are, for what purpose they were made, and where they are going. They are awake to all the important circumstances of their position. They find themselves in a dying world. They discover that they belong to a ruined race; that there is a gracious remedy provided for their lost state, by which they may be raised from earthliness, and sensuality, and the power of evil, to a life "little lower than the angels." They bless God who has called them "to glory, honour, and immortality;" and has endowed them with

a capacity to seek and find their whole happiness in Himself. Time to them is infinitely precious ; its right occupation is the means not only of increasing in all temporal excellence and knowledge ; but in holiness and happiness ; in nearer moral resemblance to God, and in intimate acquaintance with Him. They alone know the worth of time who spend it for God ; who feel themselves daily enriched by the vast revenue of joy, and peace, and happiness, which hours of delightful devotion to God produce. There is nothing of which they are more sparing than time, nothing that they watch over with more jealous care. They are living for eternity, and regard every thing in its light. They know they are hasting towards it, and they therefore keep every worldly pursuit in wisely regulated subjection to the one great end of their being, which is the salvation of

the soul, and its moral restoration to the image of God. For this great object they live, and to its accomplishment, all their untiring efforts tend.

“Their warfare is within ; there unfatigued,
The fervent spirit labours.”

And they have received exceeding great and precious promises, the belief of which has spiritualized their affections, so that they are set on things above, not on things on the earth. While therefore by their wisdom, example, and indefatigable labours of love, they are shedding a bright halo of the happiest influence around them, their heart, their conversation, and their citizenship are in heaven.

From day to day, they are filling their “odorous lamp with deeds of light ;” it is burning brighter and brighter, and they themselves with their loins girded, are like unto men that wait for their Lord.

They are reaching "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," progressing from strength to strength, and from glory to glory;—and standing (alas! that they should be so "few and far between") like beauteous "waymarks on the road to bliss." They are wise stewards, faithful over a few things, and they shall be made rulers over much; and shall be received to everlasting habitations, with their great Master's plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Doubtless there are many important and elevated stations, where by the right direction of his powers, and the best improvement of his time, man may be an honour and a blessing to society and to the world;—but we have chosen to elucidate the right improvement of time in the character of a Christian, as being the "highest style of man."

The statesman, the philosopher, and the man of science and of genius, may deserve the well-earned applause and estimation which their usefulness and talents acquire for them; but if they have not been wise for eternity, and laid up a good foundation for the time to come; however much we may admire and prize their worth and merit, we are left to deplore the folly of that man who could give anything, in exchange for his soul; seeing that the whole world, and all its applause, can profit him nothing, when he turns "his face to the wall," to surrender up his spirit, and the account of his stewardship to God. Knowledge and human power shall cease; and science and genius shall vanish away, but that man's weal or woe, according to his works in the sight of God, shall endure forever.

Unquestionably also, there are a thousand ways of misusing time, besides that

by which we have illustrated it. Mischief is worse than idleness ; and vice and crime are worse than either. But we have selected the *idler* as a striking, and painfully familiar character, and as one that appears peculiarly lamentable.

We pass by the mischievous and the vicious, and address those who do not seem to have a single object or aim in life. “ Who hath bewitched you,” that you should not aspire to the noblest and best end of your being ? Blest with unbounded leisure, and with such a prize as eternal life in your view ; with a capacity to seek and find and enjoy the happiness of heaven ; with the glad tidings of the Gospel sounding in your ears ;—oh, how shall you escape, if you “ neglect so great salvation ! ”

THE DANGER OF DELAY.

“ Man sleeps, and man alone, and man, whose fate—
Fate irreversible, entire, extreme,
Endless, hair-hung, breeze-shaken, o'er the gulf,
A moment trembles.” * * * *

YOUNG.

A HEATHEN poet, addressing the friend of his early days, exclaims with deep and tender emotion, “ Alas, how the swift years glide away !” Who that has reached maturity, does not feel the force of its affecting truth ? It seems but yesterday since we rejoiced in our youth, and exulted in all the freshness, and light-hearted gaiety of the morning of existence. The long day of life was stretched out before us in unmeasured extent, and its period was far beyond our short-sighted gaze.

But already we have arrived at its meridian; we begin to anticipate the shadows of the evening, and foretel the approaching night; already we are hastening to the grave where "there is neither work nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge." Alas! the swift years are indeed departed; but is the great business of life accomplished? Are we engaged in it? Is it even begun? Where does the high noon of life find us? Are we living for time or for eternity? Are we seeking God? Have we found Him, or are we living without him in the world?

Are we sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh reaping corruption; or are we sowing to the spirit, and of the spirit reaping life everlasting?

Reader, if you are advanced in the journey of life, how is it with you?

We do not ask how you are circumstanced in temporal things; you may

have acquired rank and station, or you may have lost them; you may be enjoying worldly prosperity, or be contending with the cares and perplexities of adversity.

We seek not to know what you have experienced of the world's joys and sorrows, its disappointments, trials, anxieties, and cares: doubtless you are deeply read in this life's common history; but all these things are the temporal, transient accidents of time, and shall shortly be as though they had never been. In the grave to which we are all hastening, these things are forgotten. In the view of the momentous interests of eternity, they suffer oblivion even now. We ask therefore, how have you spent the years that are past? Have you been laying up treasure in heaven? Are you rich towards God? Have you found the pearl of great price—the salvation that is in Christ Jesus? Is the great end of your life answered? Is

it well with you now and for ever? Should your sun suddenly go down, are you ready for the appalling summons of the pale king of terrors? Are you resolutely fighting the good fight of faith, contending against the world, the flesh, and the devil—laying hold on eternal life? Are you walking in all the marvellous light which the Spirit of God imparts? Have you seen in the clearness of that seven-fold day which it sheds upon the mind, the great realities of eternity,—the worth of the never-dying soul,—the unspeakable value of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,—the surpassing blessedness of those who obtain it,—the unutterable misery of them who perish without it? And does the soul-transforming view influence every thought and sentiment, every feeling and affection? Does it strengthen you to trample the world beneath your feet, forgetting the things

that are behind—the joys, the sorrows, the occupations, the hopes, the fears, the transient interests of mortality, and pressing forward with ardour to the prize of your high calling, crying continually, “That I may know Him, and be found in Him; that I may be faithful unto death, and obtain a crown of life?”

“Stretch out my soul in hope, and grasp the prize,
Which in eternity’s deep bosom lies.”

“Blessed art thou,” with whom it is thus,
“for flesh and blood have not revealed
these things unto thee, but thy Father
who is in heaven.”

The day may be far spent; the night may
be at hand; thy Lord may come in the
second watch, or in the third watch, but
thou art ready to go forth and meet him.
With thy lamp trimmed and burning,

“Thou, when the bridegroom with his feastful friends,
Passes to bliss at the mid hour of night,
Hast gain’d thy entrance, happy, wise, and pure !”

But, reader, if you are still a stranger to these things ; and have hitherto lived in vain, though your sun has reached its meridian ; if there are here and there grey hairs upon you, and you know it not ; if your hours are fleeing swifter than a post, and the shadows of the evening are stretching out ; if the harvest be drawing nigh, and you are not saved, be persuaded to pause for a moment, and consider the warning admonition, “ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge in the grave whither thou goest.”

Can there be a more deeply affecting thought than this suggests ? The fixed, unalterable state of the dead ;—our certain and speedy approach to the grave ;—the total and perpetual incapacity there for either purpose or action. As we lie down in that lonesome resting-placc, so

shall we rise to judgment. There the right hand forgets its cunning. The once busy thoughts disturb not the slumberer's rest. No heaven-ward affection shall ever warm the cold and motionless heart, nor holy purpose kindle there. The voice that might once have been lifted up in prayer is silent, and the knee that might have bowed before the throne of mercy, is immoveably stretched out. No tear of penitence shall ever soften, nor ray of hope illumine the sunk eye. It is closed on the contingencies of time, and shall open on the immutabilities of eternity. The "dull, cold ear of death" shall hear nothing till the archangel's trumpet break the dreary sleep, and call the dead to come to judgment.

What a dread prison-house is the grave! Every power, every faculty, every member fast bound in chains of adamant! The passive clay sown in dis-

ability and weakness, returns to corruption ; and the spirit to God who gave it, to be reserved for the judgment of the great day. The stewardship is surrendered up ;—the race is run ;—the battle is fought ;—the harvest is ended ;—the day of grace is over ;—the die is cast ;—the destiny is sealed ;—the sentence is gone forth ;—the state of the dead is immutably fixed for eternity.

With what tremendous importance and interest does this consideration invest the state of the living ! What value does it give to time ! Oh you, whom conscience tells that you have hitherto lived in vain ; you who have the great business of salvation yet to accomplish, how can you trifle with your fleeting moments ! How loud is the voice from the tomb, Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ! What do you find still undone ? Answer in the silent chamber of

your own breast. Are you ready for death and judgment? Defer not to ascertain it; give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids, till you have secured a well-grounded hope, "full of immortality." Yours is yet an "accepted time," and "a day of salvation." You may weep and pray and agonize; and flee for refuge to the hope set before you in the Gospel. Oh, do it now, and with all your might. Defer not to begin to live. It can be no subject for levity to die eternally.

Enter into your chamber, and shut your doors about you. Shut out the poor, vain, trifling, dreaming world. What is it all to you, if to night or to-morrow, your unprepared soul may be required of you. Try to bring your mind under the influence of the spiritual world, and realize the things which are not seen and eternal.

Could we draw aside the veil, and behold those regions of despair, where there is “weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth,” where “their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ;”—could we enter into sympathy with those lost spirits to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness, and conceive the anguish with which they look back to their state of probation in this world ; how they now regard the mercies they once slighted,—“the accepted time” they suffered to glide past,—the throne of grace they never visited,—the strivings of the Spirit they resisted,—the invitations of the Saviour they disregarded,—their “day of salvation” which is gone for ever ; could we conceive how they estimate the privileges of which we count so lightly, the time we abuse, or fritter away ; could we tell what those despairing, imprisoned spirits would give for a single hour that

they might redeem it,—for one opportunity to bend the knee on praying ground, within the precincts of mercy, and flee to the only refuge of those who are ready to perish—the grace of God in Christ Jesus; we should learn rightly to prize the inestimable value of our short-lived, uncertain moments.

But to them,

“No patron, intercessor none—now past”

“The sweet, the clement, mediatorial hour.”

Hear the voice of their hopeless lamentation.—“I might have taken the cup of salvation; again and again it was offered to me, but I refused it. The things that belonged to my peace were once within my reach;—I might have grasped them; but now they are hid from mine eyes. I might have entered the strait gate that leadeth unto life;—but now it is shut. Life and death, blessing

and cursing were set before me ;—I delayed to choose, till it was too late. Oh, ye pangs of remorse and despair, who can dwell with your everlasting burnings ?”

Were that invisible world disclosed to our view for a single moment, with what keen conviction should we feel that one thing alone is needful:—with what ardour should we pursue that one thing till we had obtained it ! We should account it madness to trifle on the brink of perdition, —to throw away the offered felicity of heaven, and despise the vengeance of Almighty power ; to hasten unprepared to the grave, conscious that there is “ no work, nor device, nor wisdom, nor knowledge ” there.

“ Rise up then, all ye that are at ease !”
“ Be troubled, ye careless ones !” Before it be too late, begin the work of your salvation. It is not to be performed without

an effort. It is not fit conflict for a dying pillow. It is not work for the languid, inefficient, sinking powers of expiring nature. "The art of Christianity is long and difficult." It requires a life-time, and the best energies of sound health. You have not only pardon and peace to seek, but that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." You have to acquire that renewed character which will render you meet for the presence of God. You may now ask and receive; you may seek and find; you may knock and it shall be opened unto you; but these are acts that require vital and spiritual energy. The prayer of faith, which is heard and answered, is the importunate petition,—“I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” The search which elicits the hidden and heavenly treasure, is an eager, persevering, absorbing, ardent pursuit ;—“I am determined

to know nothing saving Jesus Christ, and him crucified." The successful call to which the gate of mercy is opened, is the reiterated cry of agony,—“Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!” “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”

Delay not from day to day, lest death surprise you, before your work is done, and seal your unhappy, irrevocable destiny for all eternity.

What must it be to perish forever? God forbid! that you should know too late the dire secret.

THE UNWISE CHOICE.

WHERE are the living? on the ground
Where prayer is heard, and mercy found,
Where in the period of a span,
The mortal makes the immortal man.

Who are the living? they whose breath
Draws every moment nigh to death;
Of bliss or woe the eternal heirs;
Oh what an awful choice is theirs!
MONTGOMERY.

“I HAVE set before you life and death,
blessing and cursing; choose life, that
thou and thy seed may live.”

It may fairly be alleged that in this land
of gospel light and abounding knowledge,
the choice between life and death is set
before every one; and that the thousands
who, some with deliberation, others with
indolent indifference, choose misery for

their portion, have the blessing of salvation placed within their reach in all its attractive beauty, and glorious excellence. They have "line upon line, and precept upon precept." "Doth not wisdom cry, and understanding put forth her voice," displaying in her right hand length of days, even for ever and ever, and in her left, enduring riches and honour? But such is the incapacity of the natural mind, to discern and rightly estimate the things that belong to the soul's everlasting peace, that mankind not only turn away from the cup of blessing, but perversely choose the poisoned chalice of misery, and wrath, and curse.

There are a great many apparent varieties in the choice men make in life; but the Bible admits of only two distinctions,—“life and death,”—“blessing and cursing.” So that they who have not chosen the Lord for their portion, (whatever may

be their worldly prosperity,) have chosen the curse of the Almighty; they who have not sought and found eternal life, (however they may be disposed to dispute it,) are lying under the sentence of the second and ever-enduring death.

Were the mind of man not so totally depraved and ungodly, there could not be any hesitation in his choice. Having presented to him on the one hand, the favour of God, and the happiness of heaven; and having exhibited to him on the other, the evil and the curse of sin, and its dire sequence of everlasting torment, were not his spiritual senses stupified by the god of this world, man would not reject the offer of boundless blessing, to choose the bitter curse. Yet while we see one accepting the proffered gifts of God, we perceive thousands coolly preferring to neglect them, and preparing themselves, by a life of wilful disobedi-

ence, and self-pleasing, for their threatened doom. "God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." While we discern a few—the wise and favoured few—entering the strait gate, and walking in the narrow way that leadeth unto life, we perceive the broad road leading to destruction, thronged with myriads. And "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men prefer darkness rather than light." Did wisdom not lift up her voice in our streets ; were the things that belong to our peace hid from our eyes ; had the light of the knowledge of the glory of God not appeared in our world in the face of Jesus Christ, there might be some excuse : but now condemnation, and wrath to the uttermost, are come upon all those "who know not God, and obey not the Gospel" of his Son.

To one whose mind is spiritually alive

and awake, it is an awful and deeply painful spectacle, to see any one living in forgetfulness of God, and at enmity with him. It may be cowardice to dread the frown or the derision of the world;—it may be weakness to stand in awe “of a man who shall die,” and the son of man who is “crushed before the moth;”—it may be pusillanimity to “fear them who can only kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do;” but it must be foolhardy temerity not to fear Him who hath power to “cast both body and soul into hell-fire:” it must be madness to be at enmity with Him who holds the forked lightning in his right hand;—who hath made the worm that never dies, and ordained the fire that never shall be quenched. It is most marvellous that anything short of hardened unbelief should render men indifferent to the tremendous state in which they stand in relation to God.

It is conceivable to get so far "wise above what is written," and acute in philosophic conceit, as to style the truth of God, a fable; to regard heaven as the enthusiast's dream, and hell as an unseemly bugbear; to discard as a merely fictitious notion, that the Lord of all the hosts of heaven, takes any cognizance of this lower world; and more than all, that he so loved it, as to give his only-begotten Son in order to redeem it. It is just possible to look on miserable man, as raised above the brute, only by the curse of reason, and consciousness of wretchedness—rising, generation after generation, and falling in succession, like the withered leaves of autumn, as worthless, and as utterly to perish. But *to know the truth,—to believe the truth,* at least, not to deny it, and yet "forget God;"—to choose none of his ways;—to live without him in the world;—to prefer any portion, however mean, unsatisfactory, or

miserable, to the light, and life, and joy, and happiness of a portion in God, is irrational inconsistency and lamentable folly.

There are many who in the opinion of the world, have not been guilty of any breach of moral duty ; who bear a fair character among their fellow-men, stand high in their own estimation, and who, if they think of God at all, flatter themselves with acceptance in his sight also ; but the word of God pronounces them to be “ dead in trespasses and sins,” “ alienated from the life of God by the ignorance that is in them ;” and as forgetters of God, classes them with the wicked “ who shall be turned into hell.” They stand accused of the neglect of the first and great commandment,—“ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” Far from considering the length and breadth of this compre-

hensive obligation, they overlook and neglect the claims of the Creator altogether.

“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and *all them that forget God.*” Be entreated to hear this, ye whose consciences witness that you habitually forget God ; ye who live without one sentiment towards him, becoming the creature to the Creator ; ye who find ruinous security in wilful ignorance of his character, and disregard of the relation in which you stand to him. Here lies your condemnation, that “light is come into the world,” but you prefer darkness. With a Bible within your reach, and surrounded by every means of grace, you are left without a plea for misconception of the Divine character, or ignorance of the nature of the choice set before you, or of the important position in which you at all times stand on the verge of eternity.

To persist in rejection of the blessing ;—to cherish practical unbelief ;—to foster hardness of heart, and proud indifference ;—to live to yourselves, without any acknowledgment of God ;—to lead a life of devotion to this present world, though without reproach among men ;—this is to forget God, and to choose eternal death. There needs not the aggravation of vice to determine your state in the sight of God. Not to receive Christ is to reject him, and to reject Christ is to despise the only means of escape from the Divine wrath, and to draw down certain condemnation. “ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh ; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth ; much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him who speaketh from heaven.”

If you are not translated into “ the kingdom of God’s dear Son,” there is only one alternative,—you are still under the

dominion of Satan. Do you feel no interest to know to whom you belong, whose servant you are, and whether you shall be saved or lost? Test your state. Read your destiny in your hardness of heart, and reckless carelessness. Can you fix your attention for a moment on invisible and eternal things? Are they not distasteful, and viewed as chimerical? You are interested and keenly excited by any or every trifle, however foreign and remote, if it have but the savour of earth, to recommend it: but you hear of that holy mystery, which the angels desire to look into,—which it mightily concerns *you* to know,—“the blood of the everlasting covenant,” with drowsy inattention. The Bible is a weariness to you, like a thrice-told tale. God is not in all your thoughts; still less is he the object of your highest delight and reverential love. Your associations with the unwil-

ling and unwonted remembrance of his name, are not those of holy fear and sacred pleasure. From the recollection of him at all you gladly escape. To banish God from his own creation, would not be to you, like blotting out the sun from our system. It would not fill you with darkness, horror and despair, were you assured by the fool who hath said in his heart,—“There is no God.” You might not be willing to avow it, but you feel that you could dispense with him. The probability of his righteous, moral government, and final judgment is a restraint against which you secretly rebel. You desire to “rejoice in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth,” and follow all its own devices unchecked ; and you do not wish to allow the thought that “for all these things, God will bring you into judgment.” You feel no uneasiness when you

say you neither believe nor disbelieve the Gospel. It may be true or false : it appears evidently no concern of yours. They who think they have souls to be saved, and they who have nothing else to do, may see to it. The great salvation—the cup of blessing offered for your acceptance, stands by unvalued. For you the Son of God was incarnate, died, and rose again, in vain. Apostles, prophets and martyrs have borne their record in vain. The great “cloud of witnesses”—the just of all generations, have testified in vain. That “blood of sprinkling” which speaketh in accents of mercy, crying, not for vengeance, but that you may be spared for its sake, has been shed in vain. And what then must inevitably follow ? “ *Ye shall not escape.*” Your hard and impenitent heart is “treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath,” and accomplishing your destruction.

The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment against you, and shall condemn you; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, but you refuse to hear the Son of God, who speaketh from heaven. The inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon shall rise up in the judgment against you, and shall condemn you; for had the great salvation been declared to them, and established as it is to you by unquestionable testimony, they had repented in dust and ashes. The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment against you, and shall condemn you; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; but you shut your ears against those things which many kings and prophets have desired to hear, and have not heard them,—those things which were “hid from ages and generations,”—the good tidings of the Gospel of peace.

Every faithful admonition to flee from the wrath to come, which you have received ;—every striving of the Spirit,—every warning of Divine Providence, against which you have hardened your neck ;—every sweet invitation of mercy ;—every golden opportunity of your wasted life, shall rise up in the judgment, and shall condemn you. In that day, you will pass sentence upon yourself ; and shall find the first gnawings of the worm that never dies, in the consciousness that you refused the cup of blessing, and chose death.

How lightly and incredulously are you wont to think and speak of these things ! You virtually treat them as creations of fancy, not as solemn realities, in which you must inevitably share. They are not indeed tangible objects of sense ; they are as yet matters of faith ; but from their awful import, they have strong claims on

the deep consideration of frail man, who is obnoxious every moment to death, and to the consequent untimely discovery of their reality. It is worth while, surely, to determine whether they be true or false. If, after meekly and sincerely and impartially examining the external evidence for their truth; and more especially giving due heed to those divine demonstrations which attend them; against which no difficulties you may meet with, ought to have any weight, you fail to be convinced;—if, after seeking for heavenly knowledge, as for silver, and searching for it as for hid treasure, you lose your labour, and find it not;—though your case will be as singular as it will be deplorable, your conduct would be more rational than it is now, dreaming life away in indolent disregard of the claims of religion, or ignorant and unfounded opposition to them. Divine revelation deals not

in trifles. It presents to the mind, objects worthy to arrest and fill it;—objects of tremendous interest, and incalculable value; and thanks be to God, it is established by evidence and demonstration, against which, all the cavilling and reasonings, sarcasms and sophistries of wicked men, and even “the gates of hell” itself, “shall not prevail.”

It may be possible to seek after truth so indolently, with a mind so prejudiced and unwilling to be convinced, and even perversely resisting its force, that the search may terminate in doubt and darkness. For it remains a truth, which all experience confirms, that the “meek” alone “will he guide in judgment,” and the “meek” alone “will He teach his way.” Also, though the heavenly origin of Divine revelation is attested by evidence addressed to the natural understanding, it is to be proved, in a far

higher manner, by the individual experience of its renovating effects on the heart and life. The heavenly remedy for the diseases of man's nature, must not only be credited; it must be adopted and tried, in order to be effectually proved. They who, by the belief of the truth, have become "partakers of the divine nature," in whom "all things are become new, and all things of God," have the witness in themselves. They were once spiritually blind, whereas now they see; they were once spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, now they have within them the principle of eternal life, being quickened together with Christ; and are, in one sense, already "the children of the resurrection," being spiritually "risen with Christ," and having their affections transferred from earthly things, to "those things which are above, where He sitteth at the right hand of God." Following

Him "in the regeneration," they walk no longer "in darkness," but have "the light of life." Made free by the truth, they are free indeed, and believing in Him whom, not having seen, they love, they "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls."

They in whom the light has become darkness, and who are given up to the unutterable misery of doubt and unbelief, are objects of the deepest compassion. They have made a deplorable choice who are either avowedly or practically living without God in the world. "There is no peace, saith my God," for them. The voice of joy and salvation shall not be heard in their dwelling. Faith and hope shall shed no rays of light upon their dreary path leading down to eternal death. The pure and exalted and ravishing enjoyment of Divine love, which constitutes the felicity of angels, — the

happiness of heaven,—the ineffable portion of the saints of God, they shall one day be able to conceive, but shall not taste thereof. The Divine Redeemer, who died for them, they shall indeed see, “but not now;” they “shall behold him, but not nigh;” for it will be only to look on Him whom they have pierced, and wail and mourn because of him. That “city which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to enlighten it;” where “the nations of them that are saved” shall walk in the light of uncreated brightness, they shall see with anguish and gnashing of teeth. Now, for them its gates stand open continually, and the watchmen upon its walls, hold not their peace day nor night;—precept upon precept, and line upon line everywhere meet their eye. The voice of mercy sweetly invites them to take the cup of blessing,—the denunciations of

death and judgment and the coming wrath warn them to flee to the ark of refuge for safety. Vengeance slumbers, while the persuasive language is heard from day to day—"Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" But, hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they resist the Spirit, till it ceases to strive with them; they become joined to their idols, and are finally let alone; and having determinately and wilfully chosen death for their portion, they are suffered at last to "eat of the fruit of their doings," in that land of the shadow of death, where reigns the "blackness of darkness" for ever.

Does any individual glance at these pages, who is seeking "death in the error of his life?" The Lord have mercy on thee, benighted wanderer! May he draw thee by his love, or drive thee by his terrors, to "seek him while he may be

found, and call upon him while he is near!" The Lord deliver thee from going down into the pit, with a lie in thy right hand! May He who maketh the heart soft, cause thine eyes to become a "fountain of tears," that thou mayest "weep day and night!" May an arrow from the quiver of the Almighty, transfix thy conscience, drink up thy spirit, and give thee no rest, till "wearied with the greatness of thy way," and with "wandering from mountain to hill," thou yield up the unequal contest; and with that penitential sorrow which kindles new joy among the angels of God, thou bend the trembling knee, and cry out, "What shall I do to be saved?"

THE STRAIT GATE.

Be mine the narrow pathway to the skies,
Where "life eternal" lives, while nature dies :—
The narrow way, inclosed on every side,
Where walk Thy saints, with heavenly joys supplied ;—
Where walk Thy saints,—Thy everlasting arm,
Their strength, their guide, their shield from every harm!
Be mine their warfare,—and their victory mine—
Thine all the praise and power, the glory Thine !

"STRAIT is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life." This is the unerring description given by the lips of heavenly truth ; and our Lord not only says, "Strait is the gate," but he infers the exceeding difficulty of admission, by adding also, — Strive as in an agony to enter.

The strait gate, then, is the only entrance

into life: they who pass not through it, cannot see the kingdom of God.

What a solemn subject for consideration! It is figurative, but highly expressive language; and powerfully conveys to the mind, a sense of the difficulty attending the commencement of the Christian journey; and it suggests the importance of self-examination to decide whether we have made the successful struggle, and are on the way to the kingdom. They who find religion a work requiring neither time nor trouble, nor sacrifice; a work, in fact, needing so little exertion, that it may be left, and is left, to do itself, must be at a loss to reconcile their easy, loose, heartless profession, with this rigid declaration.

To the carnal mind it contains a truth most repugnant. The world will tolerate as much false religion as shall leave untouched its real ungodliness, and shall

maintain the slumbering conscience in its sleep of death ; but it manifests the most bitter opposition to the self-denying truths of the religion of Christ. A religious profession, and a name which the world does not cast out as evil, are successful stratagems of Satan, to keep possession of the deceived heart, lest men should see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be converted and saved : but sooner shall we see a camel passing through the eye of a needle, than a worldly man passing the strait gate, wearing the reproach of Christ, and “counting it all joy,” even in the face of a deriding and unbelieving world. Could this once be, Satan would be divided against himself, God and mammon might be reconciled, and Christ and Belial be on terms of concord.

The spirit of the world is proud, vain, independent, self-righteous : but the bro-

ken, and contrite, and self-renouncing spirit alone can pass the strait gate. They who enter there must look on Him whom their sins have pierced ; and that view must be accompanied by an appropriating faith in the great propitiation for sin, and by a deep hatred of all sin. So that he who passes the strait gate, undergoes a mighty change ; he may be said to be a new creature. He enters stripped of every thing in which he boasted before, simply with "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Can we marvel that so "few go in thereat?" "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," stoop to enter there. "The wisdom of God is foolishness with men ;" therefore it is not strange that the wise and mighty and noble overlook and despise this lowly entrance. "Verily they have their reward." Highly esteemed among men,

covered with worldly honours, and filled to satiety with the good things of this present life, they have a strong distaste for a strait and narrow path, where these things are lightly esteemed, or altogether laid aside. In this present life, *they* have their reward.

But the weary and heavy-laden, the hungry and thirsty, denied even the broken cisterns of this world, the mourners who have none to comfort them,—why do they so seldom find this blessed entrance into life? Alas! the proud and carnal mind is not exclusively engrossed by the great: it is found in the poorest cell, in all its sturdy opposition to the humbling doctrines of the cross of Christ.

Not only is the gate strait, but the way is narrow, that leadeth unto life. It is a path of separation from the world, hedged in on every side. To the worldly man it presents a dreary, uniform and steep path,

most repulsively rough, and painfully confined.—But it is not really so to the renewed mind. “The redeemed of the Lord,” who walk there, find its ways to be pleasantness, and all its paths peace.

True they are engaged in a warfare, to which the natural mind, where “the strong man armed keepeth his goods,” is a stranger. They are fighting “the good fight of faith.” They have fears and temptations and trials without, and their worst enemy is always within. But they are striving for the mastery over their corruptions, and their gracious and triumphant Leader often giveth them the victory : so that even in the midst of the journey, and the heat of the battle, they break out into a song of praise:—“Blessed be the Lord, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.” “The Lord is my strength and song ; and he is become my salvation.”

Our Saviour does not disguise the difficulties attendant on following him in the regeneration. He says plainly, "In the world ye shall have tribulation;"—"Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." "He that cometh after me, must deny himself, take up his daily cross, and follow me;" and he adds with solemn emphasis, "He that loveth anything more than me, is not worthy of me."

They therefore who are shrinking from the narrow path of obloquy and separation, and from the reproach of their crucified Redeemer, would do well to weigh that awful declaration, not one jot nor one tittle of which shall pass away, till it be fulfilled,—"Whosoever is ashamed of me, and of my words in this sinful and adulterous generation; of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

In the narrow way, the sincere and

zealous Christian meets with the contempt, derision and hatred of the world ; but these things do not greatly move him. He knows that wisdom excelleth folly, and he is not ashamed of having chosen the Lord for his God. He is not to be laughed out of his belief by those who, unhappily for themselves, have chosen the seat of the scorner ; nor is he to be cheated of his steadfastness, “ which has great recompense of reward ” by the aversion and reproaches of those who “ know not what they do.” The narrow way is not a weariness to him. Hear the frequent language of his heart :—“ The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures ; he leadeth me beside the still waters. Thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over.” The new and heavenly principles infused into his soul, make the way of holiness delightful to him, and by this

sure sign he knows that he has passed from death unto life. New tastes, new desires, new affections, new pursuits, new principles,—and all heaven-born,—these constitute the new creation in Christ Jesus.

True “the old man” though crucified, still lives within him ; but he is putting him off with his deeds, day by day. The residue of his old and sinful nature, is the only real sorrow in his path, and the law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, the only yoke he feels. To many of the snares and fascinations and corruptions of the world, he is already dead ; and to others he presents affections willingly crucified : nor shall the sin he hates, obtain the dominion over him, while hanging on the strength of an omnipotent Deliverer. And he is sustained in the conflict by an assurance of final and complete victory, so that even while deep anguish is extorting the bitter cry, “Oh,

wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" he is enabled often to lift up his head, which was bowed down, knowing that his redemption draweth nigh: and he anticipates with joy, rising often to rapture, the blessed moment when he shall awake up perfected in his Redeemer's likeness, and no taint of sin shall evermore destroy or interrupt the celestial joy and gladness pervading his happy, enfranchised spirit, world without end.

Blessed road that leads to such a termination! Blessed, surpassingly blessed, are they who walk therein! It leadeth unto life;—a life of glorious happiness,—a life that shall never die,—everlasting life in the presence of God.

THE CHRISTIAN'S HIGH CALLING.

To him that lov'd the souls of men,
And wash'd us in his blood ;
To royal honours rais'd our head,
And made us priests to God.

To him let every tongue be praise,
And every heart be love ;
All grateful honours paid on earth,
And nobler songs above.

LOGAN.

THE Christianity of the New Testament,
—the religion of Jesus, of which such
“glorious things are spoken,” is more
than a name which leaves its professors
undistinguished from the world. It is
not that prevalent, easy religion, which
consists of notions in the head, unproduc-
tive of any result in the life ;—of formal,

external observances, in which the affections of the heart are not engaged, leaving its subjects to the full enjoyment of this present world,—to the dominion of its evil, in bondage to its false and foolish maxims, deeply stained with its debasing selfishness, and enslaved by its customs and fashions ;— unmarked, undignified, unblest.

So slight a profession as this, is indeed, nothing more than a name; it does not wear even the semblance of godliness. But it may go far beyond this, and yet fall infinitely short of the true standard of Scripture, and may be utterly at variance with that “law and testimony,” to which it must finally be brought, and by which it will be tried.

Most persons, infidels excluded, assume to take the Bible for their rule ; but how many interpret it agreeably to their own inclinations, and choose such portions of

its truth as least disturb them ; rejecting others that interfere with their own independent, pre-conceived notions, and that cut up their worldly-mindedness by the roots. They are satisfied if their religion is like that of the world around them. If it have in it nothing of what they term eccentricity, enthusiasm and fanaticism, they consider it rational, and sufficient, and safe. They do not bring it to the "balance of the sanctuary," to discover how essentially it is wanting. Their system of religion is emphatically their own ; it is moulded according to their own fancy. It will not bear scrutiny, nor stand the test of Scripture ; how then will it abide the tremendous inquisition of the great day ;—that "day of the Lord which shall burn like an oven, when the strong shall be as tow, and the maker thereof like a spark ; and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."

They who are satisfied with their own low views of the righteous requirements of God, and who are saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace;" who take up a religion in which there is no difficulty, no self-denial, no singularity, no crucifixion, would do well to judge themselves, that they be not judged of the Lord; and to anticipate the inexorable decision of Him whose "eyes are as a flame of fire," and who will finally try the words and works of men, not by their own wilfully erroneous standard, but by the requisitions of the Gospel of Christ.

In that great day of decision when "judgment shall be laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," "the hail shall sweep away every refuge of lies;" and they may find "the bed shorter than a man can stretch himself on it," and "the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it." "Their webs will not

become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works."

The standard of the Scriptures is high and holy, and the religion of Jesus, altogether spiritual and divine. It manifests in every thing its heavenly nature, and proves itself to be a glorious reality by producing the gradual renovation of the soul in the image of God; and by conferring gifts and privileges of the most exalted character.

It is no light or easy thing to be a Christian. There is no ambiguity about the character, no difficulty in establishing its distinctive marks. In vital religion,—the only religion that will stand the test, there is a new creation of the whole inner man. "Old things have passed away, all things are become new, and all things are of God." There is the actual communication of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

The believer has the forgiveness of sins through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and being justified by faith, he has a sure ground of permanent peace with God. The Son also makes him free with the glorious liberty of the children of God. He is chosen out of the world, to be one of a peculiar, holy, consecrated people,—“a royal priesthood.” “Holiness to the Lord,” is inscribed upon him; and the one glorious end of his being is to show forth the praises of Him who hath called him “out of darkness into his marvellous light.” Singularity is neither his dread nor his aversion: it is the badge of his high calling, he being “chosen,” “peculiar,” and “holy.”

Mark his distinction from the world;—how dignified his office! how sacred his services! Raised by Him who hath loved him, and bought him with his

own blood, to be a king and a priest unto God, it is his sacred obligation and high privilege, to offer upon the altar of his heart, the incense of praise, and a pure offering—presented and accepted through Jesus Christ. His heart is the temple of the living God. It is consecrated to the exercise of every hallowed and devout feeling, and to a holy and active obedience to the whole will of God.

He has “not yet attained, neither is he already perfect;” but he possesses within him a divine principle of love to God, which has even now sanctified his will, so that the law of God has become the law of his mind; and however weak and imperfect in the act, and in the measure of his obedience, it is the one vigorous, continual purpose of his soul, to serve God, and to honour him with a holy worship.

Observe the intercourse that is opened between his soul and God. Truly his "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." God manifests himself unto him, as he does not unto the world. He proves the gracious fulfilment of that promise, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Here is the crowning privilege of the great salvation which is in Christ Jesus—he is admitted into fellowship, and communion, and friendship, with God. A way into the holiest of all has been opened for him by the blood of Jesus;—he enters within the veil, sprinkled with the atoning blood. There he draws near to God, and God, his reconciled God and Father, draws near to him in the communications of his love and of his glory. There, though a sojourner on the earth, and compassed with infirmities, he is blest with

glorious manifestations of condescending love, which draw out his soul in fervent adoration; and in devout rapture, he exclaims, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." "Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee!"

His renewed affections rise in intense aspirations towards the Father of his spirit. Assured of his acceptance in the Beloved, that he has access to God by Him, and is raised to the enjoyment of these spiritual blessings in heavenly places through Christ alone, he obtains a glimpse of the great salvation which the Son of God descended from heaven, and was made in the likeness of our flesh in order to bestow.

Happy believer! you who have realized

these great things, how does your heart burn within you, while admitted into the holiest of all, through the merits of your Redeemer ;—standing there, accepted and approved in him ; justified freely by his grace, who is made the very righteousness of God for you ; having peace with God ; and not only peace, but “joy unspeakable and full of glory !” He gave himself for you, “the just for the unjust,” that he might *thus* bring you to God. He loved you, and washed you from your sins in his own blood ; and hath chosen you one of a kingly priesthood ; and hath called you with a holy calling,—that you should show forth his praise. You are separated unto God—a living sacrifice ; no longer your own, but being ransomed to God with a price, you are constrained to glorify God with your body and with your spirit which are his. And love—the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the

Holy Ghost, makes the offering delightful. In the feeling of adoring gratitude for redeeming mercy, you exclaim, "Lo, I come to do thy will: on the fleshly tables of my renewed heart it is written, 'I delight to do thy will, O God!'"

Ye who have named the name of Christ, and are therefore constrained to depart from all iniquity, are a "royal priesthood." Live not beneath the privileges of your high calling, nor forget your kingly dignity, and priestly sanctity. It is your sole and high office to render glory to God. The way of holiness—the highway to the kingdom, is the straight path cast up for your feet. "The unclean shall not pass over it. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon; it shall not be found there, but the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there."

Arise, O daughter of Zion, and shake

thyself from the dust, and put on thy beautiful garments. Thou art destined in the Divine purpose to be "a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty," in the hand of thy God. Now show forth the praises of Him who hath called and appointed thee to an elevation so glorious. Now aspire to prove all the "perfect and acceptable will of God;" and to partake fully of those "spiritual blessings in heavenly places," which are the gift of God in Christ Jesus.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," they are our inheritance, fellow-believers! Let us arise and enter into the possession of them; and while such privileges are ours, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, and even to dwell before the mercy-seat; and be made "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height,

of that love which passeth knowledge," let us not be satisfied to stand and worship in the outer courts, far from the quickening beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and without a glimpse of his glory; but "let us draw near with a pure heart, in full assurance of faith." Let our conversation be in heaven. Let us live as those who have received present and highly privileged elevation, as well as "exceeding great and precious promises;" and who are always looking for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

THE CHRISTIAN'S GAINS.

Who would not be a Christian ? See what bliss,
What joy, what honour, riches, peace are his !

Mark well the perfect man,—the upright see ;—
His end is peace. Such end thy portion be !
Behold his bright, transcendent, upward way,
Still brighter shining to the perfect day !

Well may his soul the toys of earth disdain,
Whose lofty Hope hath grasped celestial Gain ;
Whose conquering Faith secures “a crown of life,”—
Warring with sense and sin, victorious strife ;—
His heart—of Love divine the blest abode—
A sacred temple, where he walks with God,
And drinks already at that Fount of bliss,
Which even now, and evermore is his !

“GODLINESS hath the promise of the life
that now is, as well as of that to come.”
This, like every other declaration of Di-
vine truth, is certainly fulfilled, though
the people of God are not often found
among the noble, the prosperous, the

wealthy of this world. But rank and prosperity and worldly riches are not the promise of godliness. They are not the gains of the Christian; for his better, his real life consisteth not in the abundance of those earthly things which he possesseth. Godliness does not promise the enjoyment of this present world, but the possession of its own unspeakable reward even here.

We perceive man born unto sorrow as surely as the sparks fly upward. Sickness and death, the accidents and contingencies of life, and sorrows of every name, are the common, inevitable lot of humanity. They are the ruinous consequences of man's first transgression, which

“ Brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

We see the people of God afflicted with all these; indeed they appear to have often the largest share of the suffer-

ings of this present life. The work of sanctification is wrought in them by the Divine Spirit, through those very sufferings. The men of the world are joined to their idols, and let alone. The idols of the child of God are smitten one after another, and laid in the dust. The rich continue to add house to house, and pull down their barns to build greater ; while they who fear God, they whom he counts among his jewels, and whom he will spare, in the day of righteous recompense, as a father the son who serveth him, are frequently fed like the unsheltered tenants of the air, having neither storehouse nor barn, nor certain provision for the morrow.

The natural pride of the carnal mind, is fostered in the worldly man by the unlimited possession of those pomps and vanities which riches supply ; while to the Christian, the resources that nourish

that pride, are often dried up. In the valley of humiliation, disrobed of the world's grandeur, he is acquiring the inestimable jewel of poverty of spirit. He is purified as silver in the furnace of affliction, that the trial of his faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, may be found to the praise and glory of God. We find him often without any certain dwelling-place, "a stranger and sojourner," as "having nothing," as "sorrowful, chastened, cast down," "enduring a great fight of afflictions." We marvel as we contemplate; not discerning the unerring hand of the great Master-builder, who thus, with the strokes of his transforming chisel, is fashioning his corner-stones, and polishing his work "after the similitude of a palace."

Yet notwithstanding all this, hath godliness the promise of the life that now is;

and it may be said of the Christian, "I know thy tribulation and poverty; *but thou art rich.*"

What, then, are the Christian's gains?

He has gained his own soul.

He set out perhaps in life, seeking many goodly pearls,—things desirable to the natural mind. Ambition lured him to search for fame; learning attracted him with the pure and solid acquisitions of science and philosophy; power and influence, and distinction and pleasure stood in his path; but he found the pearl of great price, and sold all he had, that he might obtain it. Henceforth, then, he possesses it, and it is his for ever. He has at once acquired an infinite gain. He is saved with an everlasting salvation: and this salvation is not only a future, but a present possession. It doth not yet clearly appear what he shall be, "when

this corruptible shall put on incorruption," and this mortal be clothed with immortality, and its "garments of glory;" but now, even now, he is raised to an exalted relation;—he is an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. He receives the present possession of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. He is freed from the penalty of sin. He has passed from a state of curse and condemnation and wrath, to the glorious liberty of the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. God was once to him a consuming fire,—the righteous avenger of a broken law, — an offended judge. He knew him only as a God that hideth himself in the secret place of thunder: but now he is brought nigh by the blood of Christ; now he has beheld His glory—the beautiful, the wonderful, the transcendent manifestation of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. He beholds God

manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world unto himself; he receives the ministry of reconciliation, and rejoices in fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. He puts on the garments of salvation, and is covered with the robes of his Redeemer's righteousness. Jesus is made unto him of God, "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." He receives the promise of the Father and of the Son, that "Spirit of truth which the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him," but he knoweth him, for his divine influence hath come upon him, and remaineth with him. He becomes the temple of the Holy Ghost, consecrated, body, soul, and spirit. God dwells in him, and walks in him. His, by an everlasting covenant, are "the sure mercies of David;" and his are all the promises. He has acquired a "hope full

of immortality," for Christ dwells in him ; and " if Christ dwell in him, the Spirit which raised up Jesus from the dead, shall also quicken his mortal body ;" so that he is assured he shall attain to the resurrection of the dead, through the mighty working of that power of God, by which he subdueth all things to Himself. This hope, which is an anchor to his soul, sure and steadfast, enables him to outride the storms and perils of the ocean of life, and preserves him calm amidst its tumultuous agitations.

He has gained that faith by which he triumphs over the world, and endures " as seeing Him who is invisible." He lives and walks by faith ; he finds it " the substance of the things" he hopes for, " the evidence of things not seen." By faith he firmly grasps the promises. Things present and things to come—all are his—for he is Christ's, and Christ is God's. In

the happy confidence of faith, he can use the triumphant language — “Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, or peril, or famine, or the sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him who loved us.” Heir to a crown of everlasting life, he forgets his present “tribulation and poverty;” one object alone presses ever upon his attention—that he may “be faithful unto death,” and hold fast that to which he has attained, “that no man take his crown.” It is laid up for him in heaven: the righteous Judge shall give it him at that day; and he shall join the enraptured multitude, in casting it down before the throne, saying, “Thou only art worthy!” What wonder if his averted eye disdain the glare and pomp and glitter of worldly greatness, while he is conversant with heaven. By faith, unseen realities are ever present

with him. He contemplates their nearness, their certainty ; he anticipates the possession and the enjoyment. He is already " come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ; and to an innumerable company of angels ; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven ; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect ; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." The sacred influence of a realizing and elevated faith, is hallowing all the thoughts and emotions of his mind, and preparing him, by a happy and holy obedience to the commandments of God, for an entrance " through the gates into the city." He breathes the atmosphere, he is learning the language, he is becoming fitted for the society and the employments of heaven. A stranger and a sojourner in a world of which every day

is loosening his hold, he is now "a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." He presses on to attain all the "fulness of the blessing" purchased for him by Christ—salvation to the uttermost:—not only freedom from the curse of sin, but present deliverance from its power. He aspires to all the excellence and divine beauty of the new creation in Christ Jesus. Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of God, he is changed by the transforming view and exalted contemplation, into the same image, from glory to glory. And he anticipates with calm joy, the period from which nature shrinks, when the pins of his earthly tabernacle shall be loosened, his warfare shall be accomplished, and he shall see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face, and shall know even as he is known.

His is living faith, the gift of God,

sublimating the thoughts, and purifying the heart even as Christ is pure. Love, joy, and peace are among its fragrant fruits. His soul is like "a watered garden," where the sweet gales of the Spirit blow, causing the spices to breathe perfume. "Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report; whatsoever things are just and pure"—by the performance of these, his light so shines before men, that they, seeing his good works, are constrained to glorify his Father who is in heaven; they behold in him the blessedness, the reality, the heavenly nature of true religion,—the "great gain" of godliness, which undoubtedly "hath the promise of the life that now is."

But much of the treasure of a Christian,—his everlasting gain, is laid up in heaven, for the life that is to come. It is provision for eternity. Moth and rust shall not corrupt it, neither shall thieves

break through and steal. It is an indestructible, unalienable inheritance. There, one of the many mansions of his Father's house, awaits his coming,—a crown of eternal life,—robes of righteousness, purified in the blood of the Lamb,—a palm of victory,—and one of those harps of God, to whose celestial melody he shall sing “the song of Moses and the Lamb.”

He “shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, for the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed him, and shall lead him to living fountains of water.” He shall be satisfied with pleasures such as “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.” The enlarged capacity of his immortal nature shall be filled with the overflowing fulness of God! Ye who know what it is to enjoy the presence of God for a little moment, when he lifts up the

sublimating the thoughts,
 the heart even as Christ is
 joy, and peace are among you shall enjoy it
 fruits. His soul is like "a garden of fresh me-
 den," where the sweet galilee and celestial nature.
 blow, causing the spices of omnipotence to sustain
 fame. "Whatsoever thou shalt evermore defile or
 and of good report; which shall be henceforth like
 are just and pure"—by which clothed with a glorious
 of these, his light so shines in the Redeemer's like-
 that they, seeing his good and his Father's name upon
 strained to glorify his shall beam upon his brow
 heaven; they behold in the very impress and
 ness, the reality, the he- liness of God. He
 true religion,—the "glor the Mediator of
 ness which unobscured the Lamb in the
 ness of the life that now peoples, apostles,
 at work on the triumphant and
 it is everlastingly society; his
 ness shall be the one

light of his countenance upon you, think what it will be, when you shall enjoy it for ever,—not through an imperfect medium ; not with the veil of flesh between ; but with a new and celestial nature, strengthened by Omnipotence to sustain the beatific vision.

No taint of sin shall evermore defile or distress him. He shall be henceforth like the angels of God. Clothed with a glorious body, fashioned in the Redeemer's likeness, he shall bear his Father's name upon his forehead ; it shall beam upon his brow in refulgent glory—the very impress and character of the holiness of God. He shall see face to face “the Mediator of the new covenant,”—“the Lamb in the midst of the throne.” Prophets, apostles, and martyrs,—the whole triumphant and glorified church shall be his society ; his companions—just men made perfect, shining like the stars in the firmament, for ever

and ever. These—with whom in spirit he had sweet fellowship on earth,—with these he shall “spend an eternity together.” He shall serve day and night with them in the temple of their God. He shall behold their exceeding great reward, and rejoice to see them anointed with the oil of joy above their fellows, as one star differeth from another in glory. They shall worship together in the extatic love of heaven: together they shall cast down their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb! Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”

If these things are so, then hath “godliness the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” For whether we contemplate the believer in his renewed and sanctified, though militant state on earth; or in his perfected

and triumphant and glorified state in heaven, we cannot but regard him as being possessed of the only true riches. The world, with all its promises, has only broken cisterns that can hold no water, and which mock the thirsty soul with their emptiness; but the believer has found a perennial fountain; he has "within him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." By faith he has obtained the victory over this present evil world. By vital union with Christ, he shall obtain also the victory over his last enemy; and shall receive an abundant entrance into the kingdom of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Well may we exclaim, with admiration and desire, when we survey the extent of the believer's blessedness,—“How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the vallies are they spread forth, as gardens by the

river's side, as the trees of lign aloes which the Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters. Happy art thou, O Israel ; who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord ! The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them ; for the Eternal God is his refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

Let me live the life of the righteous, and let my last end be like his !

LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW.

" Here stay thy foot; how copious and how clear,
The o'erflowing well of Charity springs here!
Hark! 'tis the music of a thousand rills,
Some through the groves, some down the sloping hills,
Winding a secret or an open course,
And all supplied from an Eternal Source."

COWPER.

PURE and undefiled religion is not vain speculation; it is not a system of opinions only, neither is it merely a "form of sound words." It is not alone maintaining an orthodox creed, seated in the understanding, nor is it delusive sentimentalism, floating about in the fancy. It is not flaming and false profession,

“betraying the Son of man with a kiss;” saying Lord, Lord, while, by a sad manifestation of the spirit of the world, if not by flagrant breaches of the Divine law, it is casting reproach on the adorable name of Christ. It is not outward forms, which are its external signs but not the thing itself. It is not bearing the Christian name, nor is it exclusive attachment to any particular denomination in the Church of Christ; still less is it proud, fierce, denouncing bigotry. It is not the assiduous observance of “days and months,” and going with unswerving step the habitual round of the Church ritual, while the soul, the life, the power of religion is wanting. Above all, it is not that foul perversion of the covenant of grace—a spurious faith without works, so making Christ the minister of sin. But pure and undefiled religion may be defined to consist in the cordial,

soul-transforming belief of the great doctrines of the Gospel, and in the gracious affections flowing from that belief—*love to God, and love to man.*

Let us not be misunderstood on this grand, vital point. While we would not make "void the law through faith," God forbid that we should attempt to lay any other foundation than that which is laid—the Lord Jesus Christ—blessed for ever! We cordially believe the saving truth that a man is "justified by faith without the deeds of the law," but we do as certainly believe that whosoever obtains that living faith in the all-perfect, sufficient righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, possesses within him a divine principle which sanctifies, and produces the gracious fruits of love and obedience. Works do most certainly follow genuine faith.

Our divine Redeemer has summed up

the whole of religion in these words ;—
“ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Here then is an unerring test for a professing Christian. Here are words intelligible to every capacity. He that runs, may read them ;—the way-faring man, though a fool, cannot misunderstand them. The learned and unlearned are alike without excuse. The most enlightened philosopher must descend from his self-exaltation, and become as a little child, before he can catch a glimpse of this “ the kingdom of God ;” and the meanest capacity is commensurate to the comprehension of the sublime but simple truth.

Here then is the livery of the Christian. By this shall all men know him—that he is filled with the love of God and man. By this he may know and try himself. Here he may find palpable and indisputable evidence whether he be a Christian in name, or a Christian indeed. As a tree is known by its fruits ;—as the same fountain cannot send forth sweet water and bitter ; as men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles, so may he determine with certain accuracy to whom he belongs, and whom he serves.

Reader, try yourself. The standard is high, but if it be that to which you are required to be conformed, if God has endued you with a capacity of reaching to it, if he has set before you all the means of its attainment, it is wisdom to try yourself by it, and not by the scanty measure of those around you. Look the

truth full in the face. Let not your appalling shortness terrify you from surveying the length and breadth of these two great commandments. It is better to discover your deficiency, while attainment is within your reach, than to deceive yourself with any thing which is not "pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father," and which will inevitably fail you like a treacherous summer brook. There are some externals of religion—modes of Divine worship, of church government, and even of church ordinances, regarding which, from the present constitution of the human mind, men cannot be expected to "see eye to eye," and of which it is only catholic to say, in the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles,—“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” But there are other and fundamental truths of Scripture, necessary to be be-

lieved in order to salvation, and there are gracious fruits resulting from that belief, which are the only proof of its existence and vitality, the proof always urged by our Redeemer himself—"By their fruits ye shall know them."

And what then are these fruits? *First*—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Here is the highest test. How is the love of God manifested? It dwells in the heart—an ever-present, all-pervading, ineffable sentiment. It is sacred, reverential delight in God. It seeks and finds him everywhere, and rejoices to trace his power, and majesty, and excellency, and goodness in all that he has made,—in the glittering hosts of heaven, the stupendous display of his infinite, inconceivable greatness—in this fair world, which he clothes with vernal beauty—in the unfathomable seas, restrained within their boundary by his firm decree—in the "stormy wind,

fulfilling his word." To the eye of love, "the whole earth is full of his glory."

The love of God is manifested also in the heart, by banishing all "fear that hath torment," while it awakens a tender, filial fear—a dread of offending Him whom the soul loveth. This fear keeps the heart like an angelic guard, and meets every temptation to evil, with the irresistible appeal—"How shall I do this, and sin against God?" How shall I trespass against Redeeming Love? It makes the conscience "quick as the apple of an eye." Love is jealously awake to maintain the supremacy of God in the heart, and would thrust out any idol or possession that would come between it and the blissful sentiment,— "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!"

The love of God pours forth from the

lips in strains of praise and adoration ; it rejoices to bless and magnify his name, and to call on others to magnify it also. It delights to shew forth his loving-kindness every morning, and to talk of his faithfulness every night ; to praise him in the great congregation, and pay its vows in the presence of all his people. Its continual language is, " Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name !" " Who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy !"

Love to God is manifested also by obedience to his will ; it makes the feet swift " like hinds' feet," in running the way of his commandments. It renders the law of his mouth dearer than thousands of gold and of silver. It rejoices in his testimonies, more than in all riches, and chooses them above all beside, as a joyful heritage for ever.

And the *second* test is like unto it,—
“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as
thyself.”

What a heavenly revolution would take place in this ruined world, were this divine command made the rule of life by all those who “have named the name of Christ,” who profess something resembling obedience to God, and something resembling faith in his word! But the very opposite of this divine principle of love to man, is the moving spring of every unrenewed heart. It is debasing selfishness in every hideous form,—the fruitful parent of the envy, the malice, the strife, the hatred, the bitterness, the proud self-preference, the scornful contempt, the unrighteous oppression, the craftiness, the dishonesty, the injustice, the merciless cruelty, which render man a foul blot on the fair face of nature. Who could bear to see the deceitful and desperately

wicked heart of man unmasked? Who could endure to trace the workings of the loathsome principle of self-love throughout the conduct of society?

We turn with chilling horror from a task so revolting, to depict the beautiful lineaments of celestial love. Its portrait is inimitably drawn by the pen of inspiration. It "suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

"Love," in the *first* place, worketh *no ill* to his neighbour;" (and neighbour in the Scriptural sense of the term, extends to the remotest member of the whole human family;) therefore he, in whose bosom love reigns, will not be found in word or in

deed, an *injurious* person. He will not be seen by his example, influence, or control, corrupting society. He will not be detected in the prevalent sin of evil-speaking. Lying and slandering, backbiting, tale-bearing, detraction, malicious insinuation, unkind suspicion, false witness,—these things he has put away far from him. Lowliness of heart—the inseparable companion of love, has taught him in honour to prefer others to himself; and if in aught he has surpassed them, to ascribe the praise where alone it is due,—to Him who hath made him to differ.

On his lips is the law of kindness, because in his heart, he “rejoiceth not in iniquity.” The failings, the infirmities, the sins and the miseries of others, are sources of pain and grief to him who loveth his neighbour as himself; therefore he is never found regaling himself or others,

with the unnatural banquet of another's delinquencies or misfortunes. No "poison of asps" lurks beneath his tongue, nor are his words "drawn swords." Where is the reputation he has injured? Where the chief friends, his whisperings have separated? Where the peace he has broken? Where is the heart he has thrilled with pain?

He who loveth his neighbour as him self, is not found taking dishonest advantage of him; his soul abhors the thought of profiting at another's cost. If he be a buyer, he is not found bargaining and bating and undervaluing, and going away rejoicing in his successful selfishness, and heartless triumph over his neighbour's necessity:—this is far from love, for it "seeketh not" even "her own," still less, that profit which is lawfully another's. If he be a seller, he is not found lying, cheating, deceiving; he has "renounced

the hidden things of dishonesty," for "love worketh no ill to his neighbour."

If he be an administrator of his country's laws, he is not the supporter of injustice and severity; he "lets the oppressed go free, and breaks every yoke." The true interests of mankind, are the dearest, the only interests he knows.

If he be one of the Lord's stewards,—one with whom he has intrusted the silver and the gold, he is not found grinding the face of the famishing poor, that he may heap yet greater plenty into his barns. His table is not groaning with superfluous and costly dainties, that his pride, his ostentation, his sensuality may be pampered, while the poor in our streets are lacking bread, while the unpitied outcast, and the unknown stranger are dying for want. God forbid that he should lay up his silver and gold in corrupt and cankering heaps, to eat

hereafter his own flesh as it were fire, under any selfish or abhorrent pretence whatever ! Far be it from him, to court “the loudest laugh of hell,”—the mad pre-eminence of “dying rich.” He seeks not to find an apology for his avarice, by coolly discoursing, however wisely, on prudence, the imperative necessity of discouraging improvident habits in the poor, of stimulating industry and independence, of extinguishing pauperism ; but feeling all the force of these considerations, what God has bountifully bestowed on him beyond others, he freely gives—gives with an unsparing hand,—gives in proportion to his ample, his almost inexhaustible means. When he makes a feast, he calls not alone his rich neighbours, that he may display his abundance, and be recompensed again ; but, in obedience to his Lord, he calls the poor, and the maimed, and the halt,—

the aged, the sick, the helpless and the stranger. "Bowels of mercies," tender compassion, glowing benevolence forbid there should be a want unheeded and unredressed, while his munificent resources continue with unfailing supply, to furnish the means of relief. He is "eyes to the blind," and feet to the lame," and the cause which he knows not, he searches out. The blessing of him who was ready to perish, rests upon him, and the thanksgivings of the widow, whose heart he has caused to sing for joy, rise up in memorial of him, before God.

If he be a master, love teaches him to give unto his servants "that which is just and equal;" he is not found "sleeping with the wages of an hireling," nor penu-
riously muzzling the mouth of the ox that treadeth out his corn. He "rules with gentleness, in the fear of the Lord." The cry of oppression is never heard within

his borders, for the happiness, the enjoyment, the welfare of his neighbour, in whatever rank or station, is as dear to him as his own. He is long-suffering and kind, and doth not behave himself unseemly. He is not easily provoked. "Offences must come;" and he like others meets with them; but he "beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things." Lowly in heart, resentment scarcely rises, and never reigns in his bosom; love pardons the offender, because he himself has had much forgiven him. He kindles not at every slight, because he is "little in his own eyes."

Loving his neighbour as himself, he envieth not the prosperity, the advancement, the superiority, the attainments of others:—love envieth not the good of such, but, involuntarily rather exclaims, "Would to God, that all the debased,

and suffering, and misguided children of men, were even as these, and more also !”

Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, knoweth no self-preference, chooseth not the uppermost seats, but taketh the lowest room. The man actuated by this noble principle, is never seen pushing his neighbour aside, to advance his own interest, nor disparaging another, to exalt himself.

Love is not found imputing base motives to his neighbour, for it “hopeth all things,” and regards the searching of the heart as God’s prerogative, and not man’s. Love is ever seeking occasions of increasing the happiness of all around: kindness is ever welling up as from a perpetual fountain. If silver and gold it has none, it can always command “a cup of cold water,”—the refreshment of a kind look, a gentle word, an expression of tender sympathy, whether of joy or sorrow.

Love causes the heart to yearn over the sufferings of humanity, and instead of contributing in any measure, by word or deed, to swell the fearful amount of "violence, wasting and destruction," which deface this otherwise beautiful world, it is continually breathing "peace on earth, and good-will to men." It cannot possibly "hurt or destroy," for it is its perpetual and ardent desire, that all offences should cease, and that "the knowledge of the Lord," with all its train of blessings, "should cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

Love is "without partiality."—It knows no bounds, no barriers, no party-spirit, no distinctions, no violent, absorbing attachments. The wide world is the field over which its enlarged desires expatiate, and all mankind are felt to be brethren.

This is pure and undefiled religion.
can gainsay it? If you keep these

two commandments, if you thus dwell in love, verily, you dwell in God, and God dwelleth in you. This is the element of heaven,—pure, humble, holy, universal love. This is the badge of Christianity,—her grand and god-like distinction from all other systems of religion in the world. By these fruits of Paradise, thou shalt know, reader, if thou be a Christian.

It avails nothing to cry out, however vehemently, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ;” but art thou aiming to keep these two great commandments? Does any breach of them, fill thee, as it ought, with unutterable shame? Is love the element which thou delightest to breathe—celestial, never-failing, Christian love?

Does the love of Him who died for thee, constrain thee to live no longer, in self-seeking and self-gratification, but to

the honour and praise of Him who loved thee even unto death, and bought thee with the price of his redeeming blood, so that thou art no longer thy own, but His ;—so that all within thee rises in righteous indignation against the thought of robbing him of any part of that glory, of which he alone is worthy ;—so that all within thee is constrained to love those for whom he died also,—to love them even with a measure of that love, wherewith he loved thee, when he laid down his life for thee ?

If thou knowest these things, and if thou doest them likewise, happy art thou ! for thou art not rearing a tottering fabric on the shifting sands of a barren, unsound profession, but art building a glorious superstructure through the energy of the Eternal Spirit, on the immutable and “ sure foundation ” of the Rock of ages, to the praise and honour of the Triune

Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one only, true God, and “God over all, blessed forever.” God is in thee of a truth, for no man can do these things, except God be with him; and he will own the work of his almighty grace in thee, in that day of trial, when “the eyes of his glory,” which are as a flame of fire, shall rest upon thee; and he will spare thee in that day, as a father the son who serveth him; and he will acknowledge thee, in that day, before men and angels, according to his own faithful promises, which are yea, and amen,—“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the founda-

tion of the world : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me : for inasmuch, as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

THE END.



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